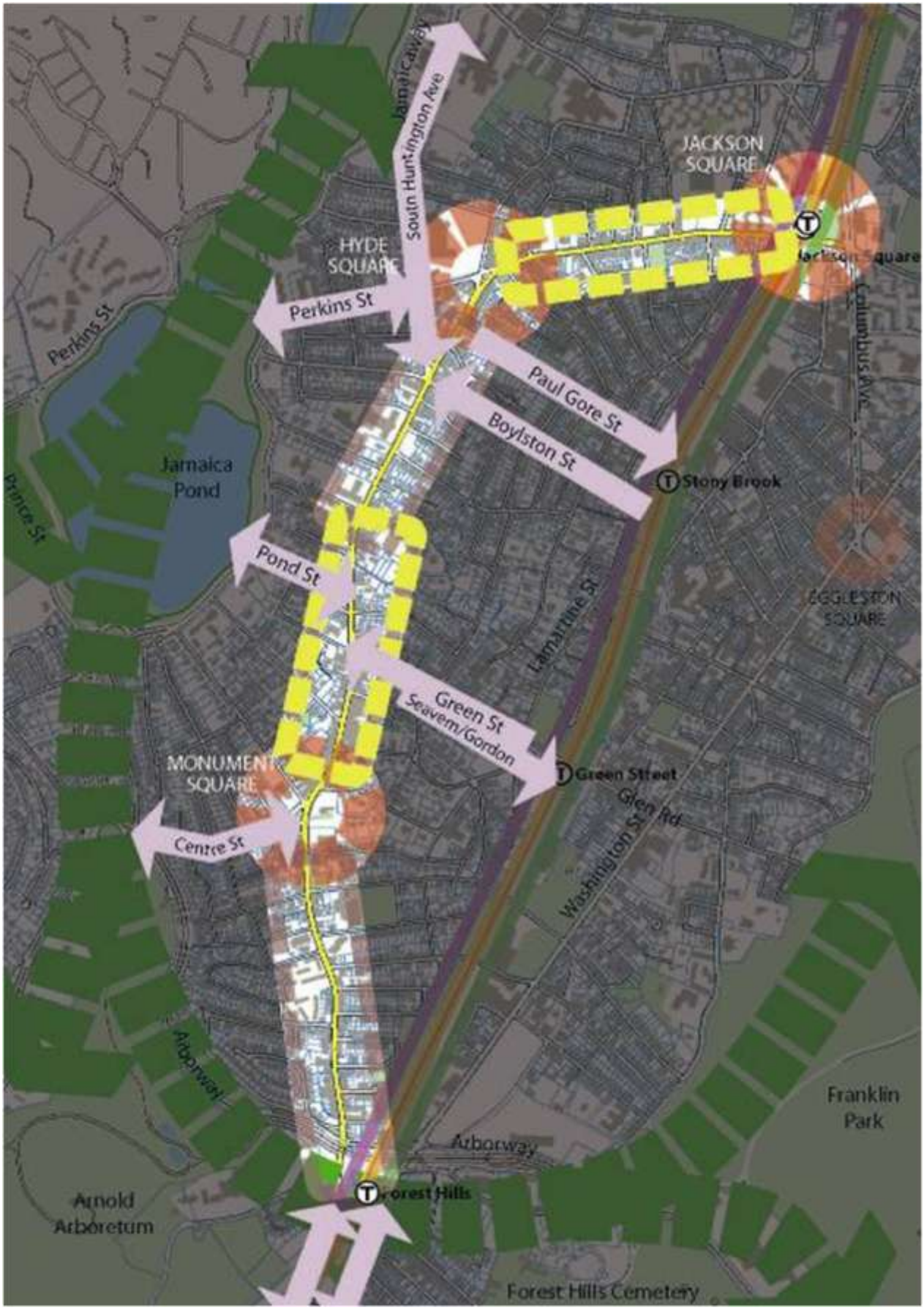
The Centre & South Streets Corridor



1. Introduction

The Centre and South Street corridor, a two mile stretch between Jackson Square and Forest Hills in the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain (affectionately known as "JP"), reflects the neighborhood it serves. The distinct neighborhoods surrounding Centre and South Streets are highly active, vital areas with abundant community-based retail and service businesses, from the Latin flavor of Hyde Square, to the new restaurants and shops in JP Center and century-old institutions.

In addition, with access to abundant open space at Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum and convenient links to employment centers at Longwood, Back Bay and Downtown, JP is attractive to both residents and to those seeking entertainment. There is a strong mix of families, students, young professionals and the elderly, and artists from a variety of cultural backgrounds. As such, JP is a leading example of Boston's "creative class" neighborhoods.

In its entirety, the Centre/South corridor is extremely active and supports substantial use by all modes of travel. With streetcar service discontinued only twenty years ago, and the tracks paved over in only the last few years, this corridor has a distinctive transit heritage. For many in this corridor transit use is a choice, not a necessity. Today, five MBTA bus routes serve the corridor, including Route 39, which has the second highest ridership of all MBTA routes. Pedestrian activity in this corridor is also extensive and particularly concentrated at the commercial nodes. The density of adjacent residential uses certainly provides fuel for this activity, as does the general narrowness of the streets and proliferation of commercial uses. Jamaica Plain is the bicycling hub of Boston. Parallel to both the Emerald Necklace and the Southwest Corridor, the Centre/South corridor is itself an active bicycling route as many neighborhood residents run their daily errands and travel locally on their bicycles.

Project Overview

The purpose of the Jamaica Plain Centre/South Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan is to develop preliminary designs for streetscape and transportation improvements that will lead to a streetscape vision and viable construction projects at designated locations. The outcome is the Action Plan contained in this report of recommended improvements designed to:

Action Plan

Vision for the corridor
What should the corridor look like in 3, 5, and 10 years?

Streetscape guidelines
Corridor-wide streetscape elements, bicycle network plan, public transportation

Redesigned transportation nodes
Traffic analysis; intersection redesign, with cost estimates

Parking management strategy
Parking demand, curbside regulations, off-street parking facility locations

- Improve safety and accessibility
- Enhance the pedestrian environment
- Promote bicycling
- Improve traffic-flow
- Manage parking
- Facilitate access to public transit

The Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan was undertaken by the City of Boston to build upon many ongoing efforts in the Centre/South corridor. With resolution of the streetcar issue, development underway in Jackson Square, and the continued activism of the Main Streets organizations and other community groups, the Centre/South corridor is poised to benefit from the City's embrace of the Complete Streets philosophy. The Streetscape and Action Plan is an interdepartmental planning effort led by the City of Boston's Transportation Department (BTD), the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS). The City staff, along with the project consultant team lead by McMahon Associates, worked with Jamaica Plain neighbors, public officials, and other interested stakeholders along the Centre/South Street corridor over a two year period to develop the Action Plan.

Public Process

The Action Plan was informed by an extensive community process. Over a dozen well-attended meetings involving residents, the business community, and advocacy groups were held. As part of the planning process, Mayor Thomas M. Menino appointed an Advisory Committee in the spring of 2009. The Advisory Committee consist of residents, non-profit organizations, businesses, and neighborhood associations. The Advisory Committee was responsible for assisting the City for the duration of the planning process, ensuring that community priorities were addressed at all stages of planning.

The Boston Transportation Department led and managed the planning initiative. The BRA's role involved sending notices and presentation materials to the Advisory Committee, creating a project website and advertising meetings. Open, public meetings were held monthly between Spring 2009 and November 2010. At these meetings, the consultants and City staff worked with the community in outlining its objectives, ideas, and plans. The community reviewed areas along the corridor, selected potential areas for improvement, discussed alternative scenarios, and provided their recommendations to the City on the selected concept plans.

2. Vision Statement

As a result of the public outreach process, a comprehensive Vision Statement was developed for the corridor. Beyond the immediate application to Centre and South streets, it was important that a vision also incorporate the larger City goals, such as increased tree canopy, sustainable storm water handling options, and provisions for bicycles. The Vision Statement is presented in the following section. It was developed through the aspirations expressed by the community in a series of workshops and served as the foundation for the recommendations in this document.

The Vision Statement is a consensus-driven starting point for future streetscape and transportation improvements within the Centre/South corridor. As one of the Boston's significant transportation arteries, made up of distinct neighborhood districts, overarching principles help guide what the corridor should look like 3, 5, and 10 years from now.

Public meeting at the Agassiz School

Vision Statement

Establish Centre/South as the area's MAIN STREET , drawing out new and existing connections while celebrating the diversity of its people and places.

Diverse, and unified…Beautiful, and functional
Special, and ordinary…Connected, and stands alone
is the vision for Jamaica Plain's Centre/South Street corridor.
A place where all uses and users are functionally and aesthetically integrated in a safe, convenient and accessible environment.

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

Build upon the corridor's identity to create a 21st century street with a Jamaica Plain character

The popularity of the stores and services along the corridor require an enhanced pedestrian network.

- Creatively utilize space adjacent to and behind buildings to enhance commercial vitality (Farmers Markets, Rear doors, outdoor seating)
- Provide special places for people to be along the corridor
- Celebrate the rich history of the corridor

Bright colors and storefronts with high transparency add interest to the sidewalk environment.

Physical infrastructure

- Ensure a well-lit street environment, with fixtures and storefront lighting of appropriate scale
- Increase street trees/canopy with species appropriate to adjacent land uses

Cultural infrastructure

- Create an environment and infrastructure that encourages people to choose car-free transportation
- Support a vibrant local business community
- Restore appropriate density along the corridor, with more mixed uses

Wider sidewalks allow for opportunities for outdoor café seating, enlivening the street.

- Preserve and expand public art (murals, et al) [Centre Street Artwalk]
- Encourage a sense of community responsibility and pride of ownership in the streetscape.
- Successfully marry design of public and private realms to provide a seamless sense of place.

Murals combined with the other public art and historic structures, offer the foundation for an "arts and culture walks".

Active sidewalks reflect the vitality of the Centre-South corridor and its restaurants.

- Reduce visual sidewalk/street clutter, with attention to removing the catenary poles
- Employ sustainable design strategies for all installations

- Employ sustainable design strategies for all softscape and hardscape installations, to reduce the corridor's carbon footprint, increase energy efficiency, and promote sky lighting.
- Plan appropriate space for community events and celebrations

Finding opportunities for additional sidewalk space is an important component of the vision.

Create a place for all uses and users

- Provide additional resources to support high bicycling interest and activity with a safe, convenient bicycling environment
- Address the differing needs of users, including youth, elderly, and the handicapped community
- Develop a pedestrian friendly corridor with a focus on pedestrian nodes and continuous sidewalk paths

- Preserve adequate traffic flow throughout the district
- Optimize management of parking resources
- Factor in the operational needs of businesses and business functions
- Promote and enhance the neighborhood's transit system including the proposed improvements to the route 39 corridor, to serve Jamaica Plain's future and expand accessibility.

Pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles need to share the public realm, balancing the needs of all.

Reinforce the Centre/South corridors as the local & regional center of Jamaica Plain

Bus service offers connections to the wide range of goods and services along the corridor and to subway service.

- Create gateway locations to and on the corridor
- Enhance connections to open spaces
- Integrate connections to and management of side streets
- Maximize connections to public transportation

The corridor provides links to public open space along Centre and South streets and the nearby network of regional open spaces.

3. "Great Streets" Corridor Analysis

Great Streets Criteria

The Centre/South corridor contains several neighborhood retail and cultural centers as well as identifiable subdistricts, both from a land use point of view and a topographic point of view. The corridor bends and rises and falls along its length, limiting the view to discreet "rooms" along the path of travel. Hyde Square and Monument Square form major nodes within the corridor but there are additional minor nodes as well. From a driver's perspective there is also the rate of travel to consider: traffic slows down in the commercial heart of Centre Street. These are just a few of the many overlapping patterns along the corridor that define its character.

In order to assess the various strengths and weaknesses along the corridor the consultant team undertook an analysis of the physical conditions that contribute to the quality of the street environment. This analysis allowed the consultant team to begin to identify:

- Quick fixes
- Short-term improvements
- Long-term improvements

The criteria used for this analysis were taken from Allan Jacobs' book *Great Streets* which identifies eight criteria that must be present in order for a street environment to be considered successful. These are described on the following pages.

1. Space to walk with some leisure

This criterion is the effective width of the sidewalk. That is the space unencumbered by street furniture, tree pits, signs or outdoor displays. Outside the commercial districts the sidewalk width was rated as adequate. In the JP commercial center between Pond Street and the Monument, Hyde Square, and the area between Jackson Square and Mozart Park, wider sidewalks would be an asset.

1

2. Physical comfort

This criterion covers protection from the elements; whether that is providing shade in the summer or allowing sunlight in the winter. The tree canopy is a large part of this, providing both shade and sun at different seasons, but retractable awnings make a big difference in the absence of street trees. The portion of the corridor south of Hyde Square is roughly on a north-south axis and both sides of the street receive similar amounts of sunlight and shade.

2

3

The area from Hyde Square to Jackson Square is on an east-west axis with the northern side of the street receiving sunlight and the southern side in shadow for the majority of the day.

3. Definition

Definition is primarily created by the buildings that line a street; although walls and landscaped areas can also create definition. This criterion is most noticeable when it is absent. Along the Centre-South corridor the greatest lack of definition is seen where parking lots directly abut the sidewalk or where auto-related uses have paving all the way to the sidewalk.

4

4. Qualities that engage the eye

This criterion is about a balance between creating interest and preventing visual clutter. It is primarily influenced by the buildings that line the sidewalk, but vegetation also play an important role. In the Centre-South corridor building are, for the most part, nicely detailed. Most of the commercial buildings have well-designed window displays while a few storefronts are covered with signs that add clutter rather than interest. The triple-deckers and other residential buildings along the corridor are generally set back from the sidewalk and have fences, porches, and landscaping that add to the visual interest. The numerous, well-tended flower beds along the corridor also enhance the experience of walking along the street.

5

5. Transparency

Transparency is the breaking down of barriers between public and private areas. The best example is the large glass storefront window that allows views through the front of the building into the interior. In fact, this is an invitation to leave the public realm and enter the private. Sidewalk cafes similarly blur the distinction by bringing private space into public areas. It is interesting to note that those storefronts with awnings did not use window blinds or shades for sun control and created much higher levels of transparency. The commercial districts in the corridor generally ranked well in this criterion.

6

6. Complementarity

This means that buildings along a street have similarities in terms of scale, style and materials and create a visually comfortable whole. In the Centre-South corridor the buildings' age and style are the strongest aspects of this criterion. For the majority of the corridor the buildings do complement one another. However, there are notable exceptions of large-scale buildings, such as the Bromley-Heath development, that are physically out of character with the rest of the corridor.

7. Maintenance

Well-maintained buildings and streets are an indicator of vitality and pride of ownership. Generally, both commercial and residential properties along the corridor are well-maintained. In the public realm, the sidewalks and streets were generally well maintained. One noticeable element that is not well-maintained is some of the street trees; although this is more likely due to the initial installation than it is to maintenance.

7

8. Quality of design and construction

The use of appropriate materials and the workmanship to assemble those materials are the heart of this criterion. The fact that most of the buildings in the corridor have been there for a long time is a positive statement about the quality of design and construction.

8

It is important to note that physical components described by these criteria fall into both the private and public realms. The designs resulting from this study, by necessity, fall in the public realm but a truly great street is a partnership between private property owners and government.

Rating the Corridor by Criteria

Using these criteria the team then broke down the corridor by building, building grouping, or open area and rated each of these segments as high, medium or low. A high rating indicated that all of the eight criteria were met; a medium rating indicated that most of the criteria were met, and a low rating indicated that few of the criteria were met.

The ratings were totaled and the results mapped to illustrate the pattern of strong and weak areas. Well over one-third of the corridor achieved a high rating. When medium-ranked areas were added to the high, over three-quarters of the corridor was included. The majority of the low-ranked areas clustered between Hyde Square and Pond Street. Generally, these were auto-oriented uses, parking lots and buildings with blank facades facing the street.

Streetscape Inventory

In addition to the Great Streets analysis, an inventory was taken of the various streetscape elements. These elements included sidewalk and crosswalk materials, street lights, street trees and tree grates, benches, trash receptacles, public art and wayfinding signage. Other streetscape elements – those that are fixed by City standards or regulations, such as fire hydrants, mail boxes and traffic control equipment – were not inventoried. The purpose of the inventory was twofold: to identify any patterns created by the various

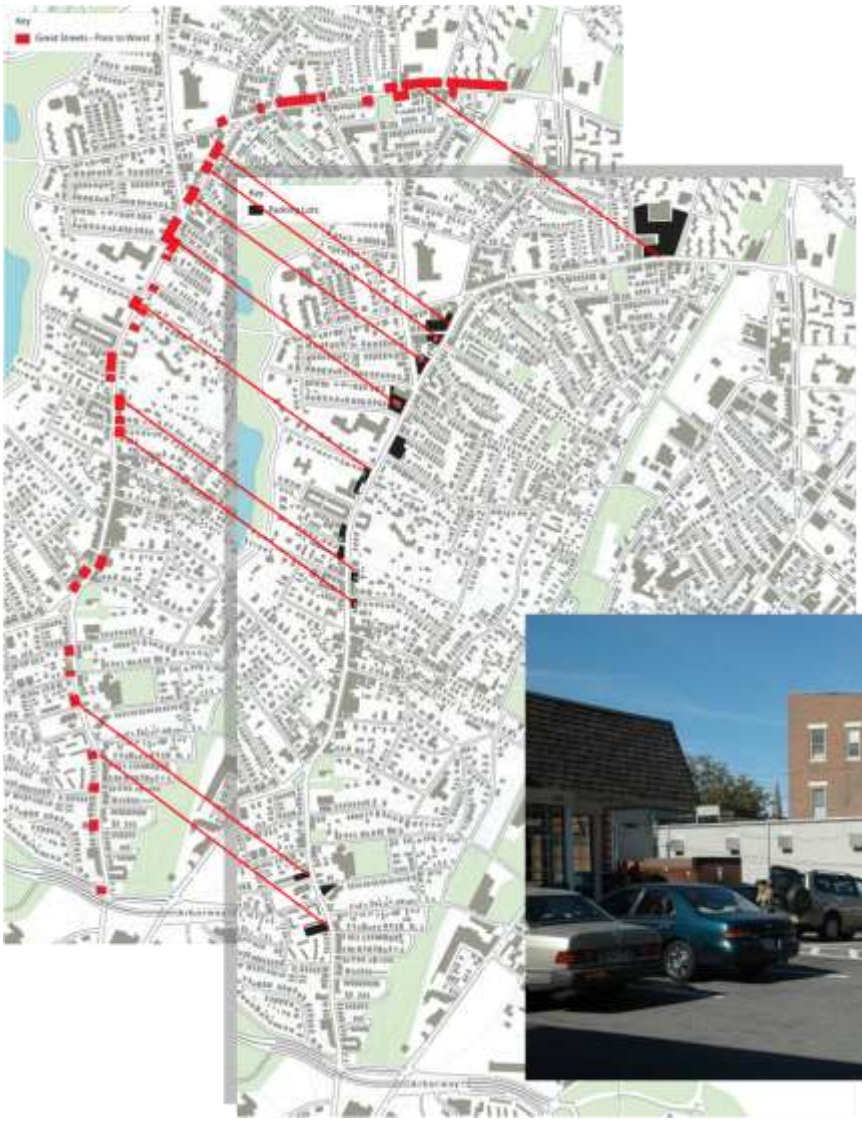
Best

Great Streets: Top Ranked

Best

Medium

Great Streets: Mid-Ranked



One category of problem areas correlates with parking lots along the street.

Great Streets: Low Ranked

elements and to catalog the set of elements used in the corridor.

There were strong patterns in certain elements. For example, the regular width of street and sidewalk throughout the corridor adds to its visual consistency. The use of the cobra head street light fixture at a regular spacing is another element that adds visual consistency to the entire corridor, although cobra head fixtures are not a recommendation. Rather, the repetition of a vertical element enhances visual interest. Other elements were less consistent; such as building height, topography and views.

Fencing materials is one particular element that the team inventoried. With the exception of publicly owned land, fencing is part of the private realm. Because it is most frequently found at the back of sidewalk, to define the boundary between the public and private areas, it is an integral part of the pedestrian experience. Fencing in the corridor fell in to two general types of materials: metal picket and chain link. For the most part, the metal picket

type fences had a black finish and fit in well with the historic residential character of the areas where they were used. In contrast, chain-link fence – even when vinyl coated – produced an industrial look that was not in character with the residential neighborhood.

Street trees are a special type of element in the streetscape because they are part of a larger environment. For people walking along the corridor, there is a "sense of green" in Jamaica Plain that is created by a combination of trees and other plantings beyond the street itself. There are many very large trees in front and rear yards that are visible from the street; either directly or extending above low buildings. Some of these extend over the sidewalk and add to the tree canopy provided by traditional street trees. Other plantings, including shrubs, hedges, vines on fences, flower beds and boxes, and potted plants on the sidewalk all contribute to the sense of green. While street trees are one of the design elements in the public realm, it is important to remember that they are just part of the picture.

The overall conclusion drawn from the inventory is that some additional consistency would add to the strength of the corridor without detracting from those special areas and elements that make the Centre Street-South Street corridor unique.

4. Corridor-Wide Guidelines

A key element of the Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan is to define a unifying vision for the Centre/South corridor. While this is broadly defined in the Vision Statement, the Guidelines are where this vision begins to take physical form. The Guidelines provide a community defined set of corridor-wide standard elements. To establish greater continuity from Jackson Square to Forest Hills, the Guidelines provide consistency and quality to the corridor in keeping with the broadly defined vision to:

Establish Centre/South as the area's Main Street, drawing out new and existing connections, while celebrating the diversity of its people and places

The Guidelines developed by the community seek to ensure that the Centre/South corridor is both unified and reflects the unique areas in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood it passes through. Setting the tone for the look, feel, and function of the corridor were primary discussion points in the development of the Guidelines. They provide a framework to select sidewalk furniture, such as benches and streetlights, materials, and landscaping that will guide all future corridor improvements. Rooted locally, while seeking the best of current city, national and international practice, they reflect the following from the Vision Statement:

"Create a place for all uses and users" (Vision Statement)

- Build upon the corridor's identity to create a 21st century street with a Jamaica Plain character
- Create a place for all uses and users
- Reinforce the Centre/South corridors as the local and regional center of Jamaica Plain

Guidelines are intended to provide not just the framework, but also the material choices and considerations that can be used to provide both the base level of design and to "*provide special places for people to be along the corridor*" (Vision Statement). The community has identified and developed designs for locations where these Guidelines could be applied in the near-term.

The Guidelines inform:

- Concept designs for Hyde Square, Monument Square, and the Jackson Square-Mozart Park area.
- MBTA plans for the Route 39 Corridor Improvement Program, for early phased application and implementation of the plan.
- Development projects and improvements to private property along the corridor.
- Serve as a basis for the City to continue to upgrade the Centre/South Street corridor in keeping with the Vision laid out through this process.

Safety

Safety, and the perception of safety, underlies all considerations for the Centre/South corridor. If an area feels unsafe, it will not be well-used. A vibrant, attractive well-used corridor with shoppers, residents, merchants, travelers and visitors all create a level of activity in which all users can feel comfortable. The allocation of the right-of-way equitable for motorists, bus riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians requires measures such as curb extensions, bicycle lanes, accessible bus stops, and improved corridor sight lines. Raised crosswalks parallel to the corridor enhance accessibility and will help to slow vehicular traffic. Enhanced lighting and well-timed traffic signals will add to safety.

Sustainability

Environmental considerations are integrated throughout the corridor guidelines. Recycled content in materials, such as sidewalks and street furnishings, contribute toward material and resource efficiency. LED-technology for street lighting holds great promise for improved energy performance. Improved street tree plantings, permeable paving, stormwater management best practices, such as rain gardens, help reduce water pollution from runoff. Further, filtering in existing stormwater systems should be explored. All these contribute to a streetscape that is inviting and accommodating to various modes of travel—transit, walking, and bicycles— which helps encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips, thereby reducing the carbon footprint typically associated with vehicular transportation.

Residential uses above street-level retail contributes to the diversity of uses throughout the corridor, and encourages daily walking, biking, and transit use.

Mixed Land Uses

Encouraging a mix of uses throughout the corridor will enhance the Jamaica Plain neighborhood. An appropriate mix of uses provides convenient opportunities and options for residents and visitors to access goods, services, arts, cultural and educational resources. A "vertical mix" of uses with residential units in the upper stories of buildings containing ground-level retail can create a more vibrant streetscape. It also facilitates a walkable community, since residential, service, and retail are located in close proximity. Mixed use neighborhoods combined with streetscape amenities, transit connections, and pedestrian and bicycle accommodations create livable and accessible communities.

Continuity

The Corridor-Wide Guidelines can vary by element in their recommendations for uniformity or diversity along the corridor. In each individual element described below. Some elements may be uniform for the entire length of the corridor; with sidewalk materials serving as one example. Other elements, such as street trees, may vary from one portion of the corridor to another. However, even elements that may vary will still relate to each of the other elements along the corridor as part of a family. The overall intent of the Guidelines is not to establish a homogenous look for the Centre/South corridor, but rather to define the parameters within which the community's character can best be expressed in a way that still melds into a cohesive whole.

Creatively utilize space adjacent to and behind buildings to enhance commercial vitality (Farmers markets, rear doors, outdoor seating)" (Vision Statement)

Visual Clutter

One challenge to accomplishing this unity with diversity is to reduce visual clutter throughout the corridor. In many instances, streetscape elements should recede to allow the storefronts and vibrancy of street life to gather prominence. They should allow historic or unique corridor destinations to be brought to the fore. In others, the Guidelines should help to create "special" places that are nodes or destinations along the

The City of Boston has formally requested that the MBTA remove the remaining catenary poles.

corridor. To accomplish this we need to look not only at what we want to build, but what should be removed. Competing and redundant onstreet signs should be consolidated or removed and unattractive existing street furniture (e.g. street lights, benches) must be replaced. The community also unanimously agreed to eliminate the remaining catenary poles, as they only detract from the corridor

Elements of the Palette

Although buildings comprise the most visible elements along the corridor, streetscape elements including sidewalks, crosswalks and street lights are important elements that reinforce a particular look and feel for the corridor.

Opportunities vary within categories of elements. Signage and curb type, for example, need to maintain relatively strict consistency throughout the corridor. On the other end of the spectrum are benches and public art, which can draw from a wider array of options and exhibit substantial individuality.

Recommendations

Recommended Elements

Elements of the Existing Streetscape Palette

The sidewalk is comprised of a number of zones. People tend to shy away from walking next to buildings and other edges and, where there is inadequate width, people walk everywhere.

Sidewalks

A large part of the vibrancy of the Centre/South Corridor is attributable to the pedestrian activity that takes place on the sidewalks. The community spent a substantial amount of time discussing ways to enhance the use of the sidewalk environment . With existing narrow sidewalks, even limited street furniture often restricts the ability to meet minimal ADA requirements, a condition exacerbated in places with an existing non-compliant sidewalk slope . In areas of high pedestrian activity (such as Centre Street leading to Jackson Square station), even relatively minor sidewalk widening of 1-2 ft. will be a significant improvement, as they will increase the typical functional path by up to 25%. Bumpouts at corners also reduce pedestrian crossing distance, and improve visibility and safety.

Sidewalk Width

With a relatively narrow corridor right-of-way, sidewalks are typically no larger than 8′ in width along much of Centre/South Streets, leaving little room for enhancements. Street trees, street furniture, café or sales space for merchants typically do not fit. Moreover, where street trees, or other amenities are present, they severely constrict the walking path, which is already too narrow to accommodate more than two people abreast.

Example of sidewalk widening concept for Center Street near Jackson Square

Recognizing the current 5 ft. sidewalk constraint, the Guidelines recommend widening the sidewalk where possible. An overall widening to 10 ft. or even 20 ft. could be considered, but always must be balanced with bicycle facilities and parking. Widening at key locations to provide merchant/café space, bus stop waiting areas, and larger street trees is preferred. Exploring opportunities to offer additional sidewalk amenities by increasing use of private property at the back of sidewalk is recommended. Moreover, functional sidewalk width should be considered in all designs, as adding even small bumpouts provides an opportunity to group street furniture

(trees, lights, hydrants), often preserving both walking space and parking simultaneously.

Example of a sidewalk with darker gray color, smooth finish and saw-cut joints.

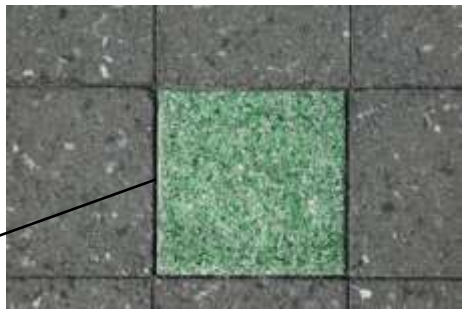
Sidewalk Materials

Despite the width, sidewalks on the Centre/South corridor are generally in good condition, with many having recently been improved by the Boston Public Works Department. However, deficiencies in the pedestrian environment continue to exist. The Guidelines propose a simple, yet elegant, sidewalk material. The community preferred to have the activity of the corridor naturally convey the sense of vibrancy, rather than through overly complicated material choices. The preferred sidewalk material is concrete with a smooth finish, rather than a typical broom finish, and saw-cut joints rather than tooled joints. This will provide an even walking surface for those using wheelchairs or canes as well as people pushing strollers or pulling wheeled carts or luggage. The color of the concrete should be gray, rather than bright white, which can be achieved by using an additive such as carbon black additives to darken the color.

Sidewalk bump outs provide an opportunity to group street furniture.

Feature Strip

Typical Boston sidewalk flourishes can include a "feature strip" along either the curbline, or the back of sidewalk, which are often designed with brick. Instead of a uniform brick look, the Guidelines recommended a granite or concrete unit pavers, to be installed strategically in commercial or special areas. Sustainability was an additional factors for the feature strip, as granite pavers were seen both as exceedingly durable, and permeable. The granite pavers could be accented with recycled, colored glass inserts. The feature strip should be continuous from Jackson Square to Forest Hills in order to facilitate an "Art Walk" or a "History Walk," featuring cultural



Occasional pavers can be substituted with colored pavers for an accent or with art pavers as part of the Art Walk.

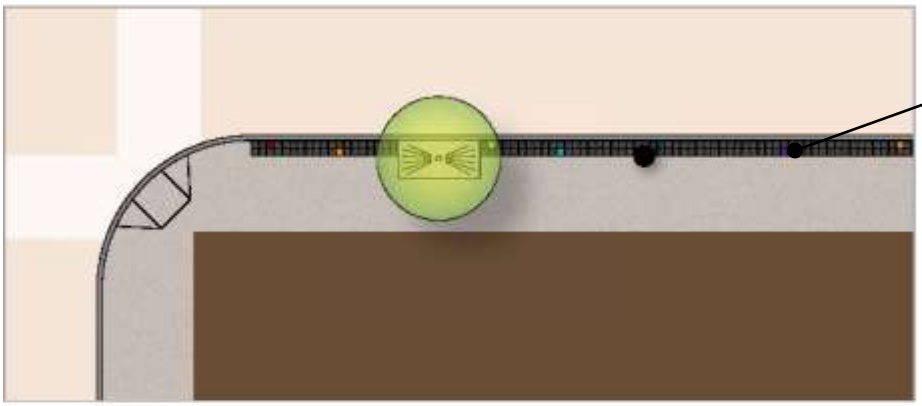


Illustration of unit pavers at curb as a feature strip.

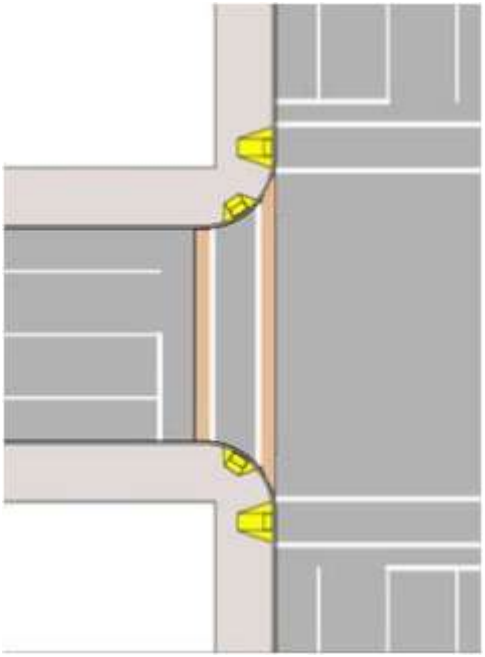
aspects of the neighborhood. The Art or History walk could draw on the numerous themes that are tied to the Jamaica Plain neighborhood, in both residential and commercial areas. Regardless of the specific theme that is chosen, it should include the entire corridor as a unifying element. This could be in the form of a continuous strip with the a similar theme, or represented by markers at regular intervals that connect the corridor.

Example of ladder crosswalks.

Crosswalks

With a high level of pedestrian activity, crosswalks serve an important functional role within the corridor. Especially in commercial areas, the presence of safe, accessible pedestrian crossings contributes greatly to the comfort level of pedestrians and consequently the connectivity of the corridor. The Guidelines recommend that crosswalks and pedestrian ramps be frequent, safe and meet all accessibility requirements. Two primary recommendations were discussed at length and strongly endorsed:

1) Traditional *ladder crosswalks* should be used for all installations. In both residential and commercial areas, the ladder crosswalk was seen as preferable for its simple and straight-forward functionality, rather than special patterns.



3-UP, 3-DOWN raised crosswalks are recommended across side streets.

2) *Raised crosswalks* were recommended for use across side streets. Commercial districts and the areas near transit stations were seen as the prime candidates for this application. Raised crossings were recommended as they would:

- Emphasize and define the pedestrian zone
- Improve safety by reducing turning speeds
- Slow traffic as it enters residential neighborhoods

While the term "raised crosswalks" encompass a wide variety of applications currently in use, the Guidelines recommend a special type—a three-up/three-down crosswalk. In Boston, where typical curb reveal is six inches, raising the crosswalk three inches from the roadway creates a transition three inches up from the road, and three inches down from the sidewalk. The three-up/ three down concept has two advantages over a flat crosswalk fully raised to sidewalk level. First, the slope from the roadway up to the crosswalk must not extend into the adjacent street which requires a shift of the crosswalk away from the intersection. Using a 1:12 slope, a three-inch raised crosswalk requires a three-foot shift in the crosswalk alignment; a six-inch raised crosswalk requires a six-foot shift, moving it further from the pedestrian desire line. Secondly, a flat crosswalk makes it difficult for visually-impaired

people to determine the location of the curb line and to know that they are stepping into the street.

Example of pedestrian scale light fixture with cap

Street Lights

The Committee recommended the City's standard "acorn" type street lights with LED lighting designed to prevent glare and uplighting. This lighting style is in scale with the street dimensions and the architecture for retail, residential or other uses, reduces glare, and increases the night-time presence of retail storefront lighting. This fixture type should be used from Hyde Square south to Carolina Avenue at the South Street Mall to reinforce the historic and commercial center of JP. In prominent pedestrian locations, double acorns should be used as appropriate. Acorn lights should have the following characteristics:

- 13 to 18 ft. height
- Approximately 75 ft. spacing, adjusted as needed for LED
- Steel fluted poles with wide decorative base
- Black
- Cutoff achieved with LED "aiming"

"Pendant" style lights with a mast arm should be utilized north of Hyde Square to Jackson Square and south of Carolina Avenue to Forest Hills. These fixtures would complete the pattern that already exists on adjacent streets. Pendant lights should have the following characteristics:

Example of pendant lighting fixture .

- 23 to 28 ft. height
- 100 to 120 ft. spacing
- Steel fluted poles with decorative base
- Black
- Full cutoff
- LED if available

Light spacing should be coordinated with tree spacing for both retail and residential areas.

Both lighting types are City standards; therefore, their use will not place any additional burden on the Public Works Department

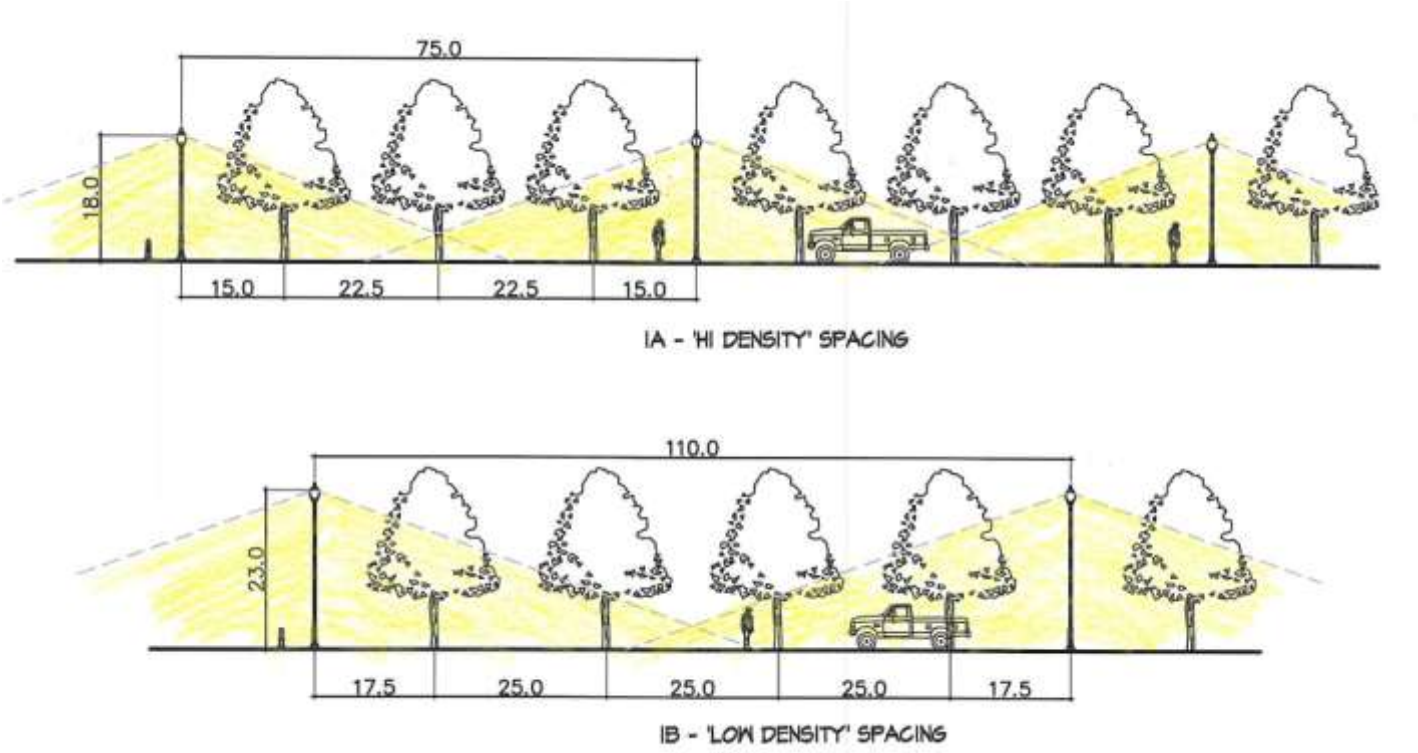


Illustration of strategies for street lighting and trees for Hyde Square south to Carolina Street (top) and for other parts of the corridor (bottom).

A Sense of Green

The Centre/South corridor boasts a distinct "sense of green," that moves well beyond the simple presence of street trees. Some areas within the corridor benefit from a backdrop of trees, such as those located in the adjacent open spaces of Arnold Arboretum, the Jamaicaway, and Southwest Corridor. These are augmented by trees on private property, especially in small front and side yards of residences. Commercial areas, meanwhile, often rely on public street trees to provide shade, environmental, and aesthetic benefits. The "sense of green" contributes greatly to the livability and feel of the neighborhood as an urban oasis. Through the Action Plan, the "sense of green" was identified as having four components (opposite page).

1. Trees in the distance

2. Trees on private property

3. Traditional street trees

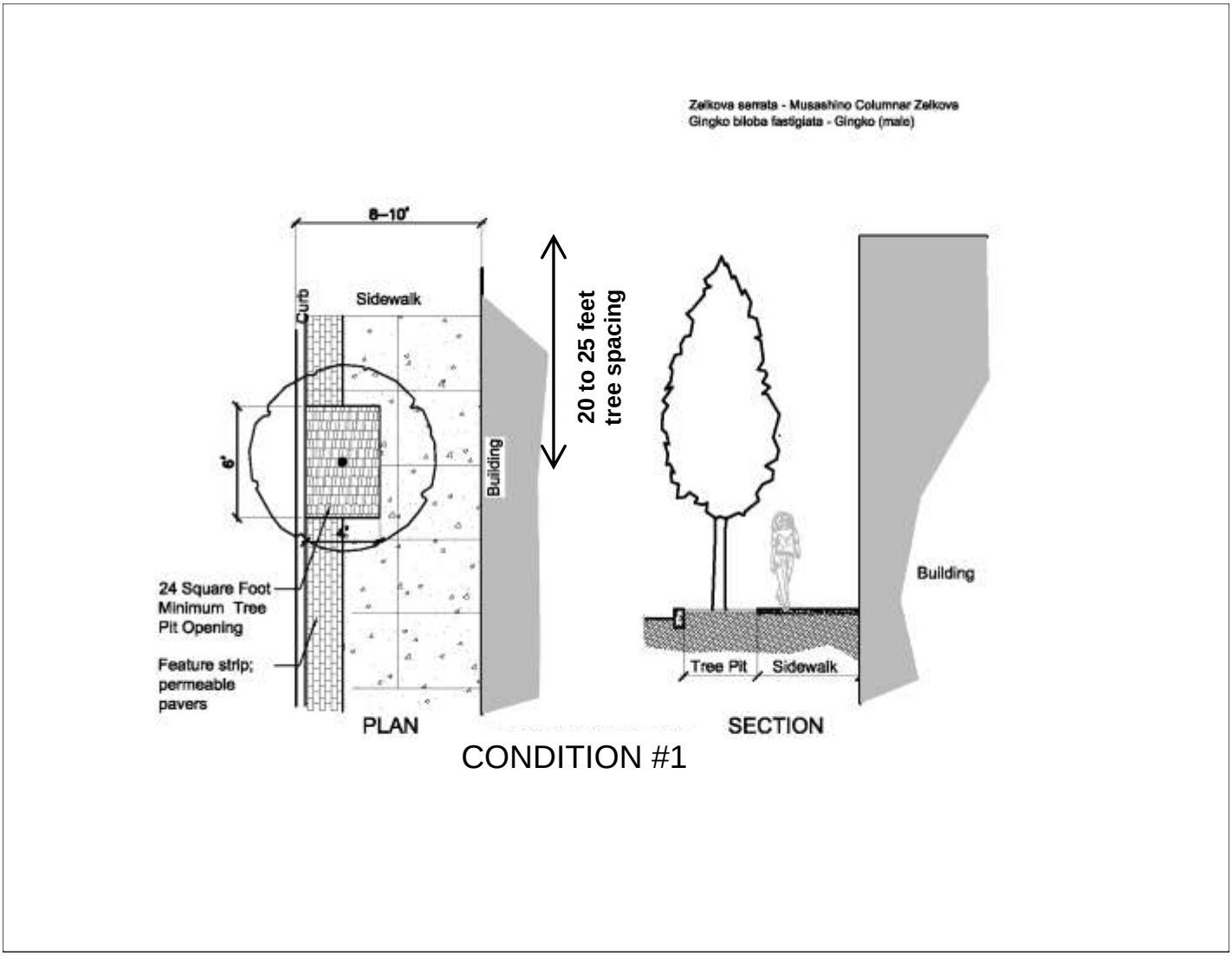
4. Lawns and shrubbery

Street Trees

Street trees on sidewalks were seen as important for their contribution to the "sense of green", but more specifically for the canopy and shade they could provide. The Guidelines recognize that this could be provided by street trees either in tree pits on the sidewalk, or from trees on private property whose canopies extended to provide sidewalk coverage. The Guidelines endorse a combination of both scenarios.

Trees that provide wide canopies were preferred in all but commercial areas, but trees need water, air, a growing medium and nutrients to thrive in an urban environment. Adding large shade trees in residential areas would enhance JP's image as an "urban oasis." They would contribute to sustainability goals by reducing the heat island effect within the corridor, improve both the air quality and the natural environment, and aid in increasing stormwater infiltration.

"A Sense of Green" Street Tree Analysis



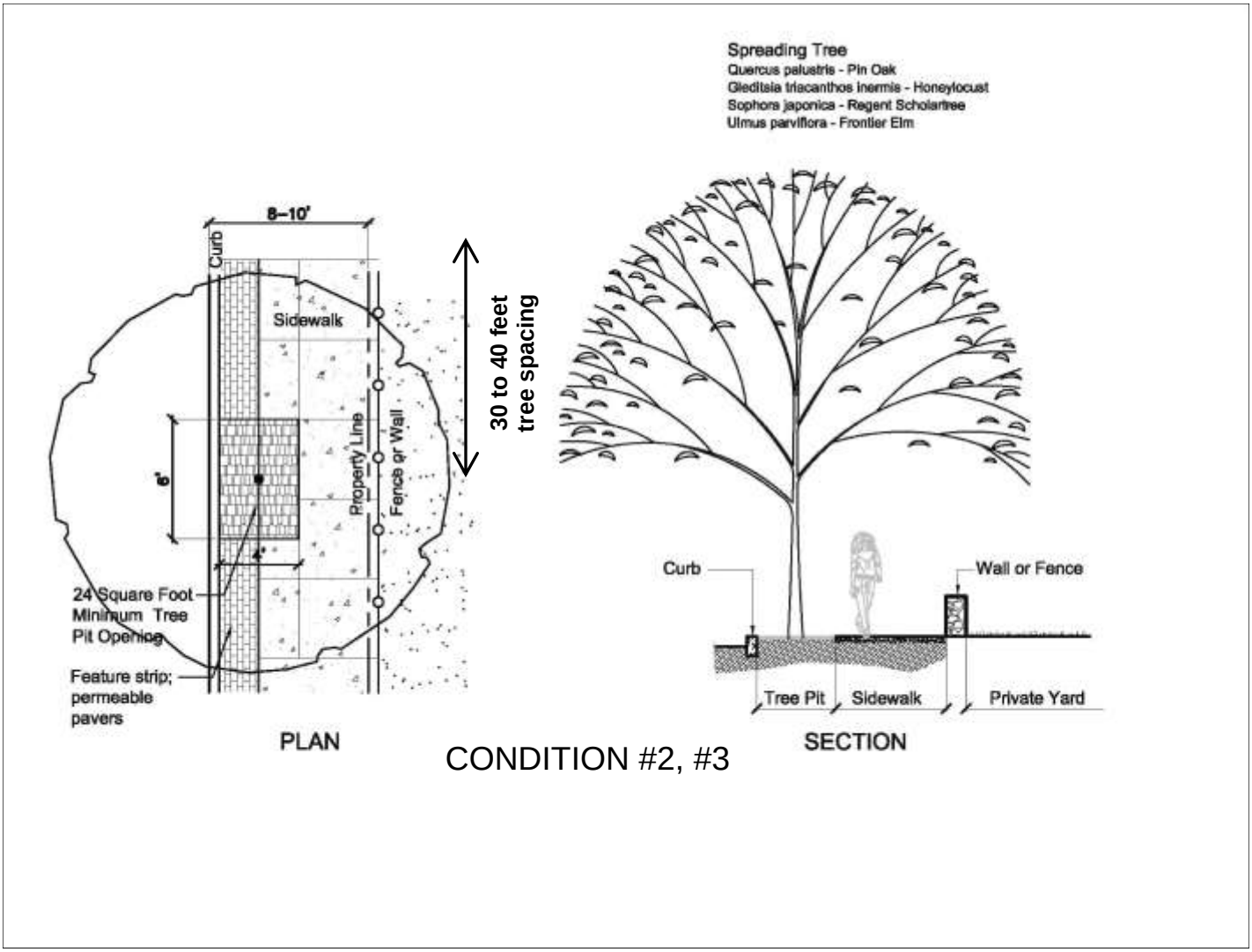
Condition 1 street trees include Zelkovas and Gingko biloba.

Gingko biloba

Zelkova

In commercial areas, trees should be placed and species chosen both to ensure storefront visibility and preserve sidewalk space. Along the Centre/ South corridor, recommendations were developed for three separate conditions.

Condition 1 covers trees on narrow sidewalks, especially in commercial zones. In these areas, buildings are typically located at the lot line and there are concerns that a spreading tree canopy would obscure building signs. All species in commercial areas should be chosen to have an upright form and branching should begin 8 to 10 feet above the walk surface. There are concerns that trees with a horizontal branching structure will obscure building signs and interfere with building facades. The Guidelines recommend trees with vase-shaped (Zelkoa serrata) or narrow upright (Gingko biloba) canopies be planted as long as they are "high-branched" so



Condition 2 & 3 street trees include Honey Locust, Pin Oak, Frontier Elm, and Sophora.

as not to interfere with pedestrians or street-level signage. Young trees typically do not pose a detriment to visibility, but as trees mature and their crowns broaden, they should be able to be pruned so that visibility to the storefronts is maintained. In commercial areas, trees should also be planted along the neutral pier between tenant spaces. On sidewalks less than 7 ft. 6 in. from building edge to face of curb, street trees should not be planted.

<u>*Condition 2*</u> is for places where a wider, spreading canopy is desirable. This condition typically involves sidewalks in residential or other areas where buildings do not abut the sidewalk. The Guidelines recommend providing repetition of species — 6 or more of the same species in a row with consistent spacing — in order to provide spatial organization, reinforce horizontal and vertical enclosure, and provide visual unity along sections of the street.

Pin Oak

Sophora

Honey Locust

Frontier Elm

Condition 3 is for the largest trees, and typically involves wider sidewalks, or uniquely created places to thrive. Larger tree pits (5 feet by 8 feet openings) are required for these to thrive.

The Guidelines recommend trees should be:

- Spaced appropriately: 30 to 40 ft. on center for Condition 2 & 3;
- 20 to 25 ft. on center for Condition 1
- Plant variety throughout the corridor
- Group by species to create uniformity and maximize visual impact

Structural Cell Tree Pit

For sustainability and tree health, alternative technologies were recommended for further exploration. As shown below, installing underground structural cells can support the sidewalk, while providing additional growing medium for tree roots to grow into. Recapturing

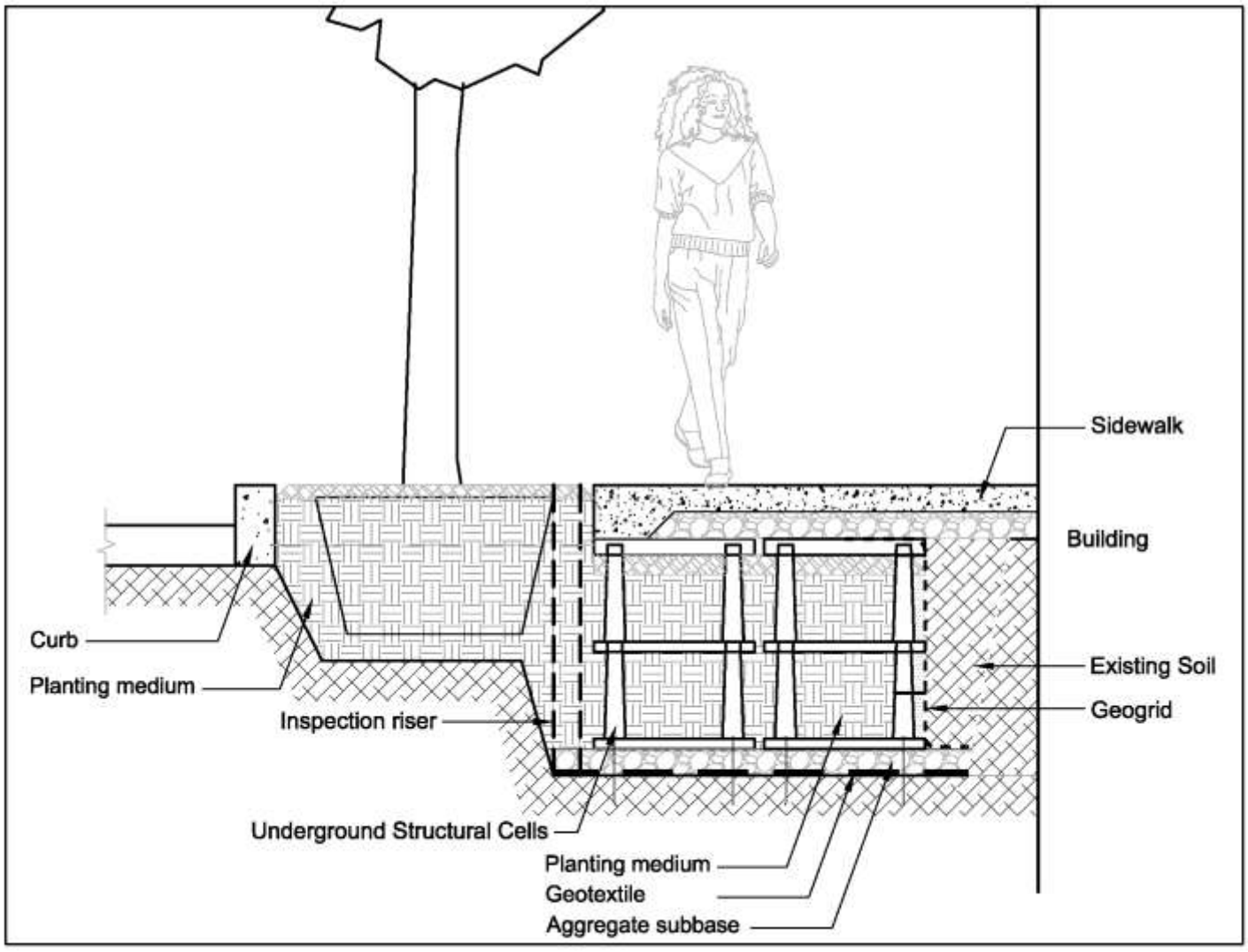


Illustration of underground structural cells for root growth beneath sidewalk.

rainwater into tree pits using perforated pipes and rain gardens wherever possible also helps to promote tree growth. Permeable pavers may also be used on sidewalks surrounding tree pits to improve rainwater capture and infiltration.

The City of Boston requires a minimum sidewalk width of 7 ft. 6 in.(inclusive of the curb) in order to plant a street tree. In order to achieve the highest level of growth and health of the street trees, methods to extend the volume of soil around the tree roots and prevent soil compaction will be used.

Trees behind the Sidewalk

In conditions where the sidewalk is too narrow or busy to plant street trees, or to complement trees planted at the curb, locations where trees can be planted on private property behind the sidewalk should be identified. Boston's tree planting program can provide for a tree on private property, free of charge, if the property owner agrees to maintain the tree.

Landscaped buffers between parking lots and the sidewalk can screen views to the lot as well as establish a stronger street edge.

Of particular interest are those locations where asphalt parking lots abut directly against the sidewalk. Tree planting in these areas as part of a buffer between the parking and sidewalk are important to achieve a continuity of green along the corridor.

Benches

The community selected black-finish steel benches with four-leg configuration and center arm rest, bolted to the sidewalk, for installation throughout the corridor. This timeless look is well-suited to benches and other improvements that are expected to be in place for decades. Artist-designed benches add a splash of individuality to a location and help distinguish a particular neighborhood. The City and community should identify locations for artist-designed benches, to take advantage of the positive impact these furnishings can have on public spaces.

Example of bench with center armrest, which divides bench into smaller segments for sitting.

Trash Receptacles

It is recommended that the City-standard solar compactor for trash disposal be installed throughout the corridor. Newer units, with a combination

City standard solar compactor (right) and combination trash/ recycling unit (left)

recycling receptacle are being tested in parts of Boston. Where possible, these units shown below are recommended for installation in the Centre/South corridor. The City should coordinate with the community as it develops a plan for locating units that are assigned to Jamaica Plain.

Example of bike corral installation. Corrals typically can park 10 to 20 bicycles, using space otherwise occupied by one or two cars.

Photo credit:
Jonathon Maus, BikePortland.org

Bicycle Racks

Similar to street bench recommendations, the City-standard post with circle, black finish is recommended for installation throughout the corridor. As Jamaica Plain has perhaps the highest level of bicycle use in the City of Boston, bicycle racks should be ubiquitous, especially near commercial areas and other corridor destinations. The City and community should also continue to explore locations where there may be an opportunity to replace an on-street automobile parking space with bicycle racks. The "bicycle corral" concept has been successfully implemented in other cities with cooperation from local businesses.

City-standard bicycle rack

Newspaper Box Corrals

The high number of newspaper boxes along the corridor, particularly in commercial nodes, creates an eyesore in the pedestrian zone. Identify locations where groupings of newspaper boxes can be located and use black finished metal structures, bolted to the sidewalk. In Boston, no more than five are permitted in a single location. Proposed sidewalk extensions are ideal locations for newspaper boxes.

Wayfinding

The objectives of a coordinated wayfinding plan are two-fold. First, signs should efficiently direct drivers to off-street parking lots. Second, pedestrian signs and maps should be located at key decision points, such as parking lots, bus stops, streets linking to T stations, and streets linking to Jamaica Pond and adjacent parks. Together, these elements serve to improve and maintain circulation throughout the neighborhood and connect visitors to local business and

other attractions.

The addition of blue P for parking signs to direct drivers to off-street lots are recommended, which turn drivers into pedestrians as quickly as possible and encourages the park-once-and-walk approach. Other signage should build on existing sign systems, such as JP Walks, MBTA and Emerald Necklace Conservancy, to locate information at critical decision points along the corridor. These locations should include off-street parking lots, bus shelters, and at intersections with streets linking to MBTA Orange Line stations and Jamaica Pond. The enhanced bus stops from the Route 39 Corridor Improvement Program also are ideal locations for coordination with wayfinding signage.

Public Art

Home to many artists and art organizations, Jamaica Plain residents clearly view art as an important expression of the community. A clear desire is to continue to develop artistic expression as part of the streetscape. The Centre South Corridor is home to numerous existing murals and public art, which are an important feature in the neighborhood's identity. While seeking to encourage the public expression of the Arts, the community wants to allow for the organic development of artistic expression. As places or nodes are developed, room for the arts should be provided, but should not be proscriptive.

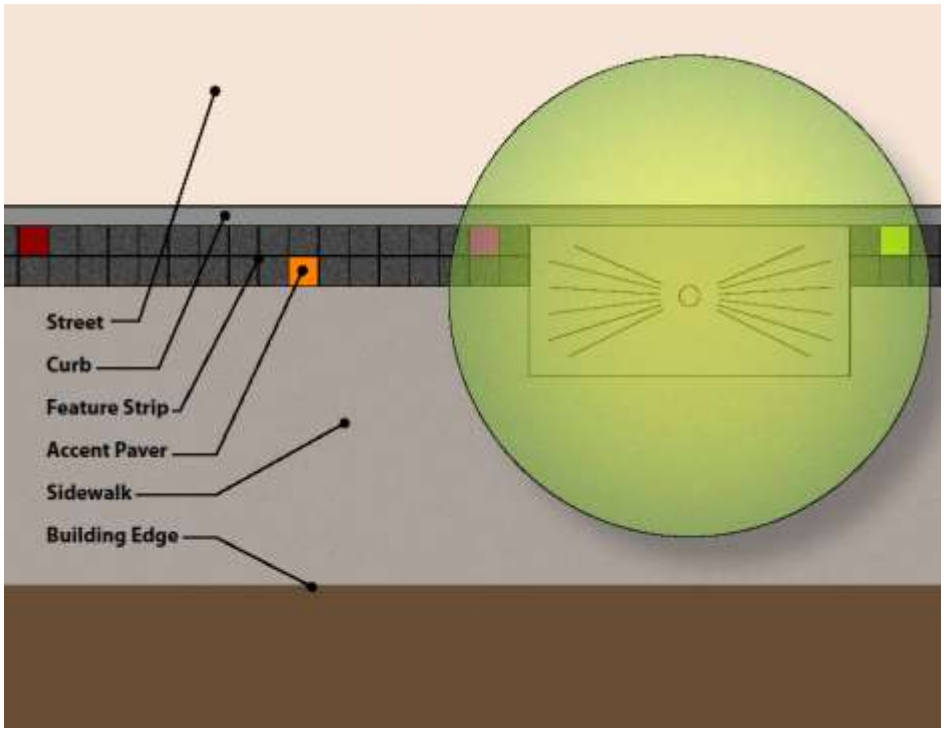
One coordinated approach to public art recommended was the creation of a Jamaica Plain Arts Walk from Jackson Square to Forest Hills. The large number of murals along the corridor could serve as a foundation, with additional locations identified for major art installations at critical decision

Markers for murals, many of which are on side streets, can also be substituted for pavers in the feature strip as part of the Art Walk.

There are a number of theories regarding the origin of the name "Jamaica Plain".

In the late 17th century, the name "Jamaica" first appears for the area of Roxbury between Stony Brook and the Great Pond. A well-known theory traces it to "Jamaica rum", a reference to Jamaica cane sugar's role in the Triangle Trade of sugar, rum, and slaves. However, a more likely explanation is that "Jamaica" is an Anglicization of the name Kuchamakin, regent to Chickatawbut, the underage sachem (chief) of the Massachusett tribe.

Special pavers that call out aspects of the rich cultural heritage of Jamaica Plain can also be included as part of the Art Walk.



Individual pavers in the feature strip can be substituted with colored accent pavers or art pavers.

points along the corridor. These ultimately could assist in navigation as well as enhancing the environment. The artist-designed benches described previously could supplement those elements. The proposed sidewalk feature strip could not only mark the path, but also be used as a framework for adding small, two-dimensional art elements along the corridor. Pavers in the feature strip could also be swapped out for identifiers of adjacent murals. JP's many historic features could be incorporated into the Arts Walk. Partnerships should be explored to develop smartphone-accessible links or downloadable podcasts in conjunction with an evolving Art Walk.

Additional Recommendations for Private Property

Fences, Walls and Hedges

Boundary elements at the back of sidewalk, particularly for residential properties, form an important part of the streetscape by reinforcing the boundary between what is private and what is public. When done well, these elements also add to the beauty and visual richness of the streetscape. Unfortunately, the use of chain-link fencing along the corridor does not add to the beauty of the street. We recommend that, as opportunities for replacement of chain link fencing become available, that it be replaced with black metal picket-type fences already found along the corridor, or other appropriate materials.

Examples of fencing types found throughout the corridor: chain-link fencing (right) should be replaced as opportunities arise.

Awnings

In addition to their visual impact, awnings can provide shade for pedestrians and reduce solar gain on the large windows typically found on commercial buildings. Particularly on narrow sidewalks where there is not sufficient room for street trees, awnings can provide shade as well as protection from rain.

Awnings can provide shade on sidewalks too narrow for street trees.

The use of awnings, rather than window blinds, also reduces glare allowing for greater transparency between the interior and exterior of storefronts; a desirable quality in a commercial district.

Storefront Windows

A high degree of transparency between the sidewalk and the interior of storefronts is found in the most successful pedestrian environments. Windows that are blocked with signs, blinds and impermeable displays reduce this transparency and are to be discouraged.

Transparency in storefronts contributes to a vibrant street environment.

Where security screens are used, the open grill screens, rather than solid, are preferred because they maintain the transparency as well as allow light to spill out onto the sidewalk at night.

The two Main Streets organizations working within the corridor are continually available to merchants and property owners to aid with storefront improvements. The City has developed standards and programs which encourage design using National Main Street Standards and can help fund improvements. Designs encourage transparency, including lighting, and contribute to commercial vibrancy. Visual barriers are discouraged and security grills are prohibited in Main Streets-funded projects.

5. Bicycle Network Plan

Perhaps no neighborhood of Boston is as associated with bicycling as is Jamaica Plain. Always more prominent here than elsewhere in Boston, bicycling use has exploded in the neighborhood, especially in the area surrounding the Centre/South corridor. The corridor is parallel to two of the most visible and well-used linear parks in Massachusetts – the Southwest Corridor Park and the Emerald Necklace. Meanwhile, the many bicyclists in the neighborhood (and many outside it) have the Centre/South corridor as their destination. Neighborhood residents are increasing bicycle use for daily errands as well as commuting. Encouraging bicycle use in the Centre/South corridor was seen as a high priority not just due to growing ridership, but as part of the sustainable future of the neighborhood and the city. As importantly, improving bicycle facilities is seen as an immediate means of achieving community and business growth.

Through the many conversations about bicycling, a number of community principles emerged to help guide the development of bicycle recommendations and facilities through this plan and for Jamaica Plain's future.

- Accommodate bicycles – The priority is to accommodate bicycle facilities in the public right-of-way along the entire length of the corridor
- Achieve balance – Bicycling is an important functional component of the corridor, but recommendations to provide facilities must be balanced with other considerations: parking, wider sidewalks, bus stops, travel lanes. Education of both motor vehicle drivers and bicyclists is critical to improve safety.
- Provide connections – Connections should be made not only to the surrounding neighborhood, but also along key streets fostering interaction between the parallel regional facilities and the neighborhood oriented Centre/South corridor.

"Exclusive bicycle facilities are the preferred facility type in Boston where feasible. On streets where an exclusive facility is not feasible, the appropriate shared facility design should be provided."

City of Boston
Complete Streets Guidelines

Process

The Jamaica Plain community is knowledgeable and passionate about bicycling. Discussions that took place during community meetings about how best to accommodate bicycles were sophisticated and at the forefront of national bicycling research and application. With a constrained, active right-of-way, and bicyclists encompassing the full spectrum of riding ability, it was evident that any design would have to be customized block-by-block. To that end, Toole Design Group, the bicycle experts on the Boston Transportation

Department's Complete Streets team, presented a State of the Practice on bicycle facility design and assisted in developing a corridor design plan.

State of the Practice

The State of the Practice was presented to the Advisory Committee and community at a public meeting on April 29, 2010 to define the terms for design and review national examples.

Minimum Design Guidelines

National design standards, as adopted by AASHTO, have defined the minimum lane widths acceptable for bicycle, travel, and parking lanes.

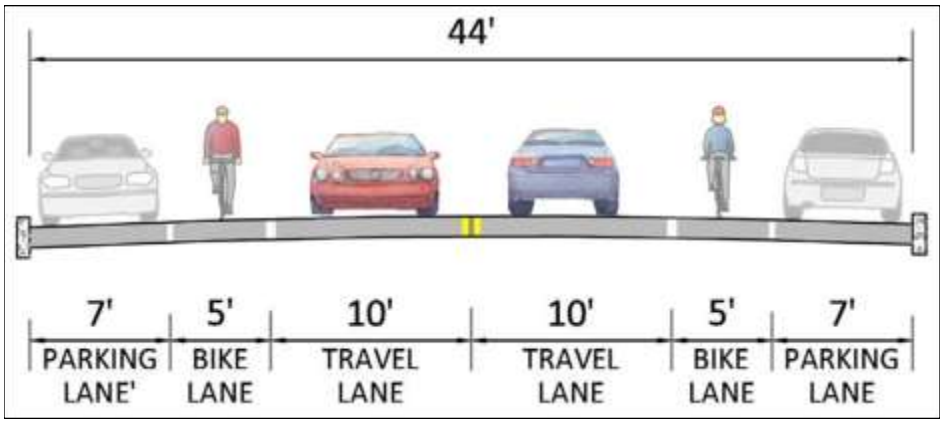
Bicycle Facility Terms

Bike Lane: *A portion of a roadway for preferential or exclusive use by bicyclists designated by pavement markings and, if used, signs.*

Shared Lane: *Any roadway where bicycles and motor vehicles operate on which no bicycle lane is designated.*

Shared Lane Marking: *A pavement marking symbol ("sharrow") that indicates an appropriate bicycle positioning in a shared lane.*

Climbing Lane: *An asymmetrical facility in which a bicycle lane is provided in the uphill direction only while the downhill direction is a shared lane.*



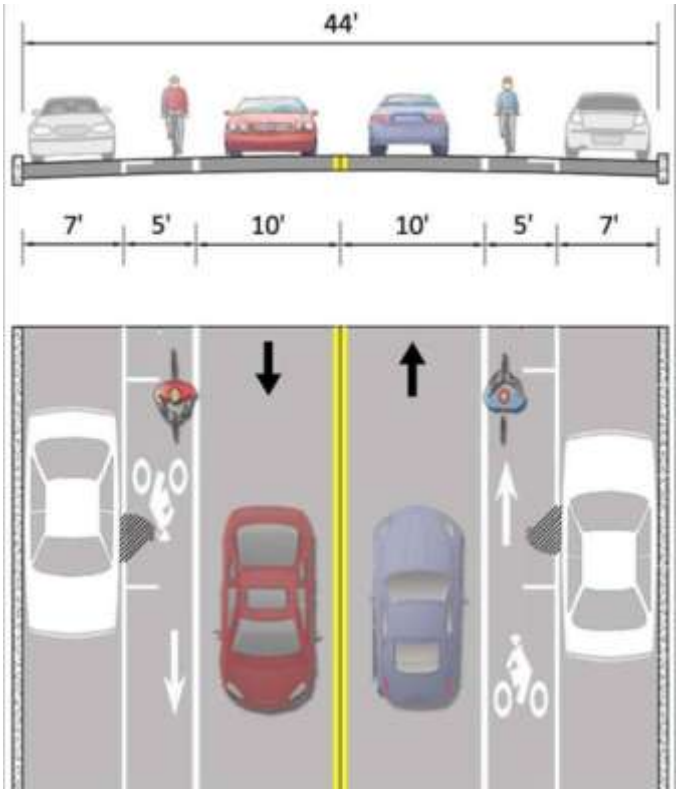
AASHTO Dimensions

Shared Lane Markings versus Bicycle Lanes

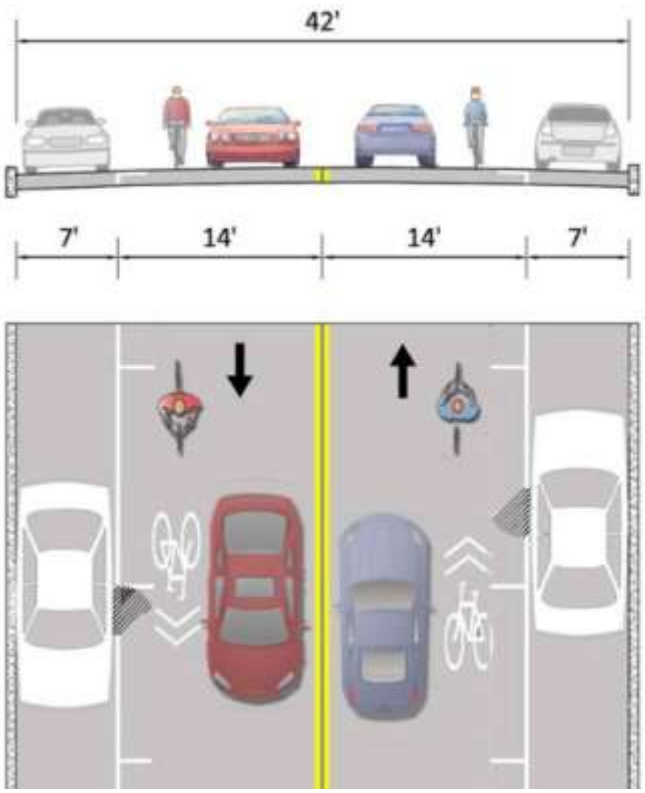
Installation of bicycle facilities, whether shared-lane markings or bicycle lanes, is recommended on streets where bicycling is present or encouraged. Much of the conversation about shared or exclusive lanes centered around safety and the comfort level of bicyclists. While they share many common elements in terms of raising awareness, there is currently no data showing that either facility reduces or increases bicycle crashes involving opening the door of a parked vehicle ("dooring").

Ultimately, the preference for the Centre/South corridor is to install designated bicycle lanes where feasible and shared lane markings or "sharrows' where roadway width does not allow it. One critical distinction added is the addition of marked "Tees" showing the door zone lines in situations where either the shared lane marking or designated bicycle lane is adjacent to curbside parking.

Results from a study completed recently in San Francisco, showed a change in cyclist riding patterns after installation of the "Tees", as they rode further from parked cars.



Typical bicycle lane

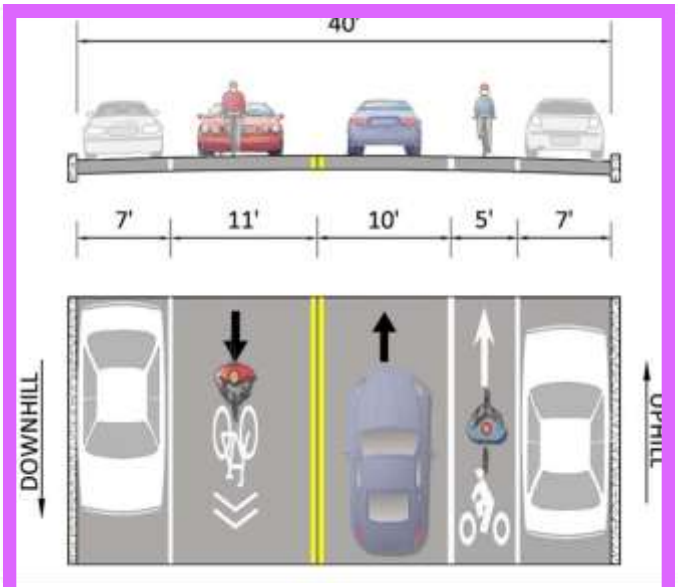


Typical shared lane

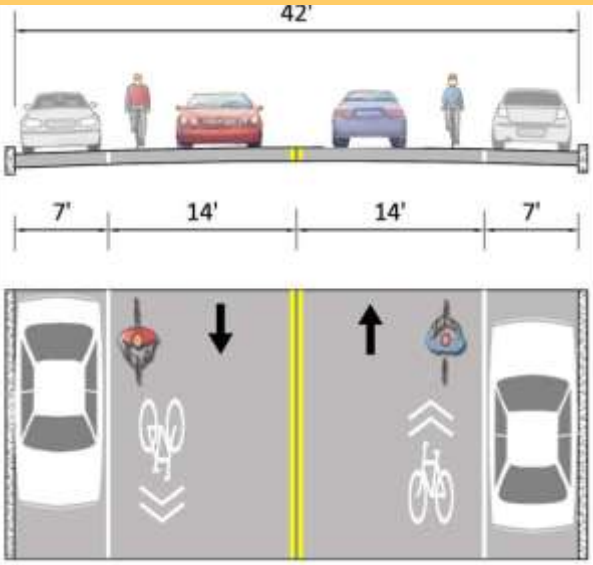
Bicycle Plan

Toole Design Group worked with the community to develop a bicycle plan for the corridor that has since been implemented. The initial plan was completed after a review of the topography, context, and layout of the corridor, but assumes that the street width and existing parking remain constant. As mentioned above, the corridor is characterized by somewhat limited curb-to-curb widths. Typical widths throughout the corridor range from 38 feet to 53 feet. While this physical reality clearly constrains the available options, it brings into focus decisions that must be made in any multimodal corridor. The concept ultimately recommended integrates the input of many stakeholders and adapts to the transportation and land use conditions of the corridor.

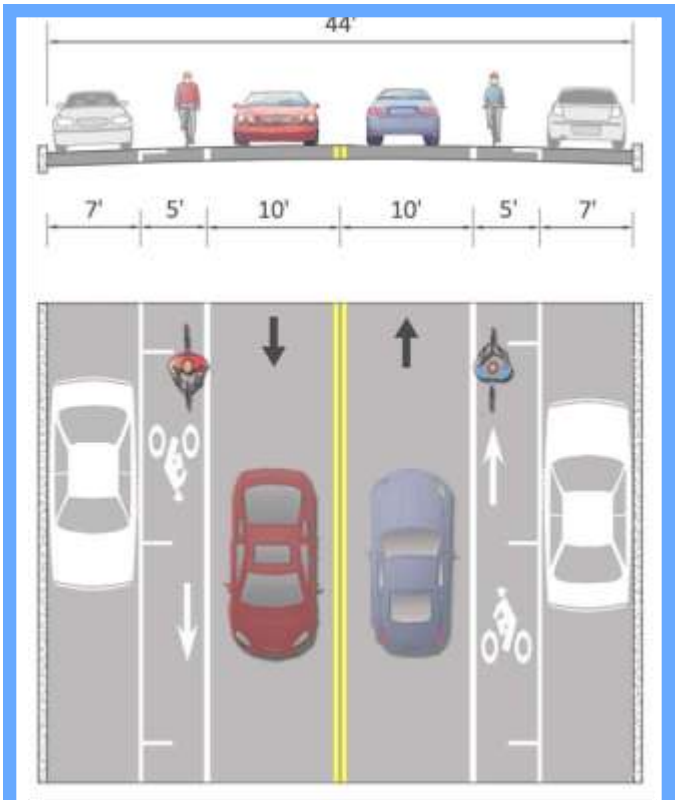
Bicycle Facilities Installed Along the Centre/South Corridor
Day St
Jackson Square
Hyde Square
Perkins Street
Centre Street
Lakeville Road
Burroughs Street
Green Street
JP Center
Monument Square
Centre Street
Sedgwick Street
South Street
McBride Street
Forest Hills
Bicycle Lanes
Climbing Lane
Shared Lanes



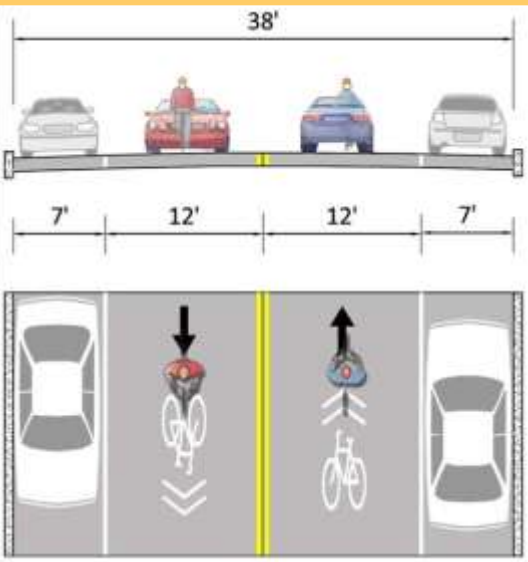
Climbing Lane



Shared Lane (travel lane > 13')



Bicycle Lane



Shared Lane (travel lane </= 13')

All four types of bicycle facilities shown are part of the plan for the Centre/South corridor.

Detailed designs based on the short-term plan shown on p. 38 were completed during Summer 2010, and the Boston Transportation Department began installation in September 2010 as part of its ongoing bicycle initiative.

Continued Awareness and Education

Throughout the process, increasing bicycle accommodations and encouraging ridership were seen as key components of the overall future of the Centre/South corridor. While the community principles that emerged in regards to bicycling will guide the continued development of the Corridor, it is understood that improving bicycle opportunities is good for the physical, environmental and commercial health of the entire Jamaica Plain community. To maintain safe and well-used bicycle facilities:

Opportunities for regional connections include the Emerald Necklace and Southwest Corridor

Continue to raise awareness of bicycling as a method to achieving commercial vibrancy

National studies suggest that bicyclists are neighborhood customers and often shop more frequently in local stores. Encouraging this behavior benefits businesses.

Bicycle lanes are the preferred means of onstreet accommodation

In all areas, bicycle lanes are preferred but often require removing parking to fit within the available right-of-way. As designs for areas develop, the City will closely review underutilized parking for possible elimination to incorporate bicycle lanes.

Green Street is just one example of a potential neighborhood connection, in this case via contra-flow bike lane

Education and enforcement are critical

As the place where the neighborhood comes together, bicyclists (and for that matter pedestrians and drivers) of different abilities will use the same facilities. With new installations complete, and to encourage additional ridership, an education and enforcement campaign around the proper use of bicycle facilities should be put in place in Jamaica Plain.

Provide specific bicycle connections

Bicycling in Jamaica Plain is not only a through movement activity, as many community members also travel within the neighborhood via bicycle. Even with the implementation of the bicycle network plan described above, connections between it and parallel networks of the Emerald Necklace and Southwest Corridor are needed. For the Centre/South corridor to continue to thrive as a nexus of bicycling activity, additional connections must be made. Neighborhood streets connecting the three main corridors have been identified and should be prioritized to incorporate bicycle accommodations. Green Street, in particular, provides a connection between the Southwest

Corridor and JP Centre, and with parking allowed on only one side of the street, a bicycle lane could be accommodated the entire length between the Southwest Corridor and Centre Street. The graphic on the opposite page highlights the corridors identified to provide these connections, which are also listed below:

- Perkins Street
- Paul Gore Street
- Boylston Street
- Pond Street
- Green Street
- Centre Street

In Fall 2010, the City of Boston installed bicycle lanes and shared lane markings throughout the corridor in accordance with the plan developed through this community process.

6. Parking Analysis & Recommendations

Parking, especially at the curbside, is important to businesses, residents, customers, and visitors of Jamaica Plain. Community perception is that this parking is continuously oversubscribed. With a limited right-of-way, it quickly became evident that the potential to remove parking, even on a limited basis, opened up myriad possibilities to achieve other desirable community goals – wider sidewalks, bicycle lanes, landscaping, sidewalk cafes. Finding the balance between all of these potential goals is the key question in the Streetscape and Transportation Action Plan. In order to understand how to make these choices, a more thorough, corridor-wide understanding of existing parking supply and use was necessary.

Boston Transportation Department vehicles equipped with license plate recognition technology aided in the parking study

Existing Conditions

Currently, on-street parking is available throughout the Centre/South Corridor. Three municipal parking lots are spread throughout the corridor, and numerous off street private lots exist, typically associated with commercial or retail uses. Curbside regulations for on-street parking vary throughout the corridor.

Corridor on-street parking

ON STREET PARKING SPACES BY REGULATION	
Unregulated	270
2 hour limit	273
1 hour limit	70
School zone	16
TOTAL SPACES	612

On street parking

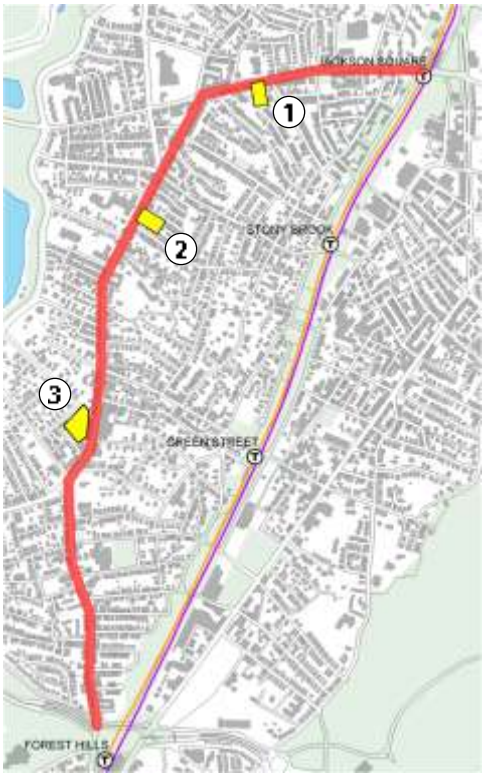
On street parking is permitted along most of Centre and South Streets, with exceptions for crosswalks, driveways, bus stops, and other interruptions typical of an urban street. Spaces are not marked, so the number of available spaces in the corridor can only be estimated. Between Forest Hills and Jackson Square, there are approximately 600 on street parking spaces. Of these spaces, approximate 270 are unregulated, 275 have a two hour limit, and 70 have a one hour limit. There are approximately sixteen additional spaces with restricted parking during school hours. There is also a limited supply of spaces reserved for handicapped access and several areas that serve as loading zones during designated portions of the day.

Corridor off-street public parking lots

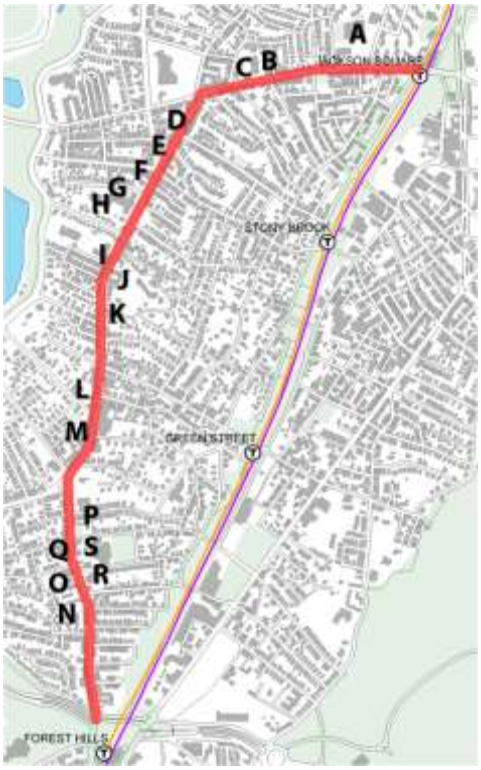
LOT	SPACES	OCCUPANY
(1) 350-352 Centre St. (Blessed Sacrament)	24	42%
(2) 490-498 Centre St. (Curley School)	33	70%
(3) 737 Centre St. (Blanchard's).	97	71%
TOTAL SPACES	154	66%

Off street – municipal

Three municipal off-street parking lots are located within the Centre/South Corridor, and are operated by the City of Boston. The total ca-



Off street municipal parking lots



Corridor off-street private parking lots

LOT	SPACES	OCCUPANCY
(A) Stop & Shop Plaza	246	72%
(B) Blessed Sacrament	17	88%
(C) Creighton & Day	12	33%
(D) HiLo	65	58%
(E) 7-11	15	73%
(F) CVS	28	50%
(G) Morrison's	20	90%
(H) Curley School	46	96%
(I) Apartments (opp Robinwood)	14	100%
(J) Apartments (opp Burrage)	22	64%
(K) West Cork Auto	17	94%
(L) Burroughs	50	94%
(M) Blanchard's	15	100%
(N) Metcalf	47	–
(O) St. Thomas Aquinas	55	–
(P) McBride	25	–
(Q) Atwood Sq.	24	–
(R) Agassiz School	18	–
(S) Carolina	18	–

Key Terms

Parking Occupancy: *Percent of total spaces that are filled at a given time*

Parking Duration: *Average length of stay of a parked car*

pacity of these lots is 154 vehicles.

Peak occupancy of public off-street lots occurred in the morning for Blessed Sacrament and Curley School, and in the evening at Blanchard's. Blessed Sacrament was less than half occupied when observed in the evening.

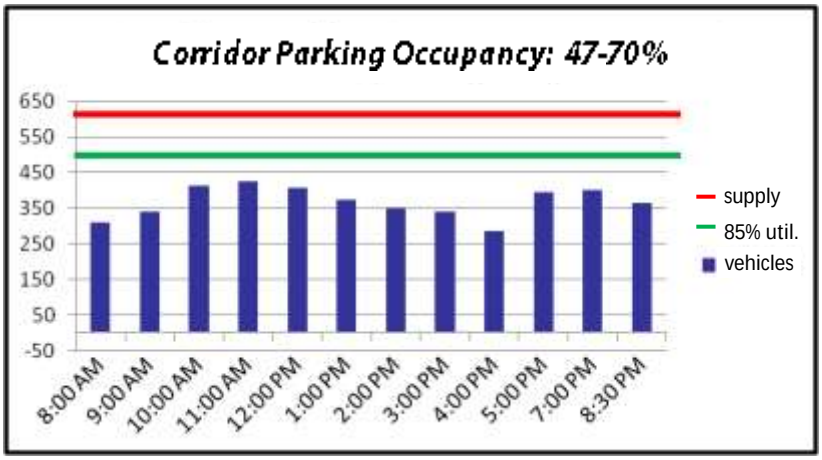
Off street – private parking

The largest of the numerous off street private parking lots were also inventoried and are shown in the diagram to the left. Regulations and use restrictions vary by facility, but generally private lots are for use by employees or customers of the adjacent establishment.

Parking use

Given the size of the corridor, and the depth of information requested, a specially equipped BTD vehicle was used to conduct parking occupancy and duration analysis . On Tuesday, April 13th, 2010 the vehicle completed hourly passes along the corridor beginning at 8 AM, with a final pass at 9 PM. The vehicle was equipped with license plate recognition technology, which allowed capture of the number of vehicles per block, but also the ability to determine the length of stay of particular vehicles. This information was balanced against the inventory of parking spaces and aggregated by corridor section.

On a corridor-wide basis, on street parking occupancy fluctuated between 47% and 70%, as shown below. Note that parking typically achieves a "functionally full" level when it is 85% occupied, and this threshold is shown in green below.



Corridor-wide on street parking occupancy

JP Centre	80% of cars park for less than 1 hour	10% of cars park for more than 3 hours
Hyde Square	85% of cars park for less than 2 hours	15% of cars park for more than 6 hours

Corridor-wide occupancy peaked from 10 AM – 1 PM, and then again from 5 PM to 7 PM. The average duration of all cars observed is 1.86 hours.
All of the parking results are shown by segment in appendix B, and several key observations from the analysis are described below.

Recommendations

- Explore strategic parking removal to achieve corridor goals

Overall parking occupancy of less than 75% demonstrates that available on-street parking exists. Removing one or two spaces on a block would allow for creation of sidewalk space for outdoor cafes, street trees or other amenities described in the guidelines.

Existing conditions summary

- *In all areas, at all times, parking occupancy is typically well below 85%.*
- *Commercial areas (JP Centre, Hyde Square) showed the highest occupancy*
- *In residential areas, occupancy typically peaks after 5 PM, which is typical for the land use.*
- *Existing parking regulations (1 hour, 2 hour parking) are observed, but with violators.*

- Maximize onstreet parking through design

Any design of bus stops, curb extensions, sidewalk improvements, or traffic signals must be done with care and attention to its impact on onstreet parking. Moving bus stops to far-side (past the intersection), combining curb extensions with fire hydrants, narrowing driveways or other such design elements all can preserve curb space for onstreet parking.

- Perform targeted enforcement of overtime parking

While most spaces are used in accordance with the existing regulations, the low percentage of vehicle parking over the limit occupy a disproportionate share of the available space. Overtime parking should be enforced, especially in commercial areas.

- Consider adding parking meters in commercial districts with community approval

Within the highest demand commercial areas, parking meters should be considered. With the City's new multi-space meters, several possibilities have opened up for community consideration:

- Pricing could be adjusted to reflect neighborhood character
- Efficient parking is promoted because spaces need not be marked
- Time limits could be adjusted so customers wanting to exceed the current 2 hour maximum would not be penalized.

- Improve signage and attractiveness of the municipal parking lots

Clear, marked directional and informational signs are an early first step towards the maximum utilization of these resources. All should be scheduled for design upgrade, as a more attractive and accessible facility would encourage greater use. The Mozart Park municipal lot has been identified as most in

need of upgrade, with many commenting that they do not use it today because it is perceived as unsafe.

- Pursue partnerships with private parking lots

Parking for employees is a key issue for many merchants, and certain private lots are the best alternative to accommodate this demand, while freeing up on-street spaces. The Hi-Lo Supermarket lot is among those identified for potential partnership.

Design of Transportation Nodes

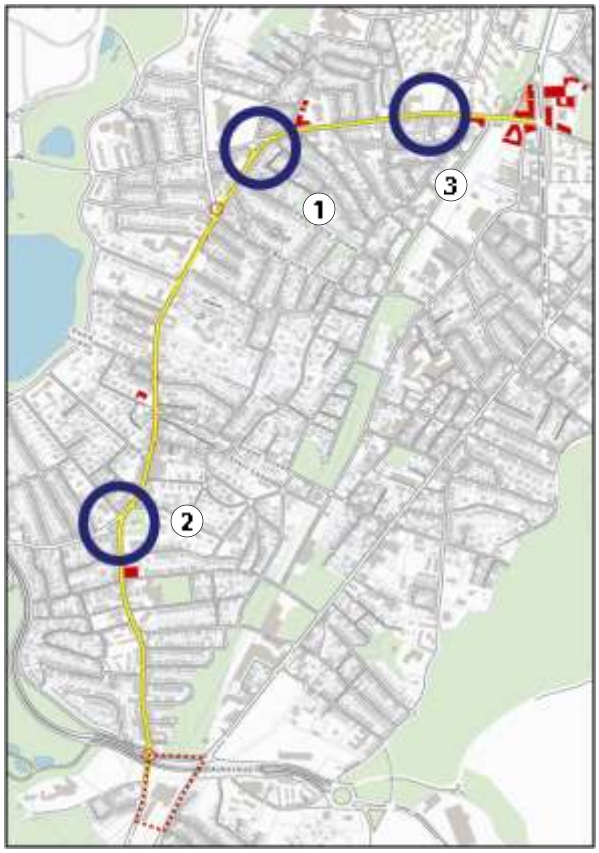
Having developed a vision for the Centre/South corridor, corridor-wide guidleines, and recommendations for the bicycle network and parking, conceptual designs have been developed for specific locations to apply these principles to specific transportation nodes within the corridor.

Each of these nodes is an important connection point between the corridor itself and the various residential and commercial districts along the way. Improvements to each of these major intersections must support these community districts and recognize the opportunities and constraints associated with the transportation infrastructure of each location.

The three transportation nodes along the corridor for which preliminary designs have been developed include:

- Hyde Square (1)
- Monument Square (2)
- Jackson Square to Mozart Park (3)

For each node selected for improvement, the design includes traffic configuration and streetscape design that is reflective of the community's vision. Improvements are focused on improved pedestrian and vehicle safety, while improving overall access to better support existing and future uses.



Aerial view of Hyde Square

Aerial view of Jackson Square to Mozart Park corridor

Aerial view of Monument Square

7. Hyde Square

Hyde Square is an important commercial area on the Centre/South corridor, and refers both to a specific intersection and the larger Latino flavored commercial district that surrounds it. The area is a mix of both commercial and residential buildings. The actual intersection of Hyde Square is at the bend of Centre Street, where its axis changes from North/South to East/West. The rotary at center of the intersection is a defining characteristic, and is one of the few in Boston. Perkins Street and Day Street also are part of Hyde Square forming the West and North legs of the intersection, respectively.

Goals and Issues

Reduce expansive paved area

Although the rotary gives this intersection a distinctive form, it makes pedestrian crossings in the area difficult due to the street width that must be crossed. Centre Street is especially wide (over 60 feet) within the intersec-

Existing Conditions, Hyde Square

tion, compared to the typical curb to curb corridor width of 40 to 44 feet. The wide street areas allow for vehicles to operate both using and bypassing the rotary, making vehicle travel faster, but creating a significant pedestrian barrier between each side of the Square. Meanwhile, the sidewalks are often inadequate for the level of pedestrian activity, and do not provide the space needed to create plaza, retail or seating space in Hyde Square. Trading roadway space for pedestrian/plaza space is a clear goal of Hyde Square redesign plans.

The positive defining characteristics that shape Hyde Square are the closely spaced building facades—in particular the curved front of the Art Deco build on the west side of the Square; the planted rotary in the center of the intersection; and the wall enclosing the MSPCA-Angell property. On the negative side, the Square is also defined by the large amount of asphalt pavement around the rotary and long crosswalk.

Support Existing Vibrancy

As the vibrant heart of Boston's most notable Latino commercial district, supporting and enhancing this vibrancy is a key goal in the redesign. With residential, commercial and institutional uses spread throughout Hyde Square, the community's goal is to preserve this mix, and balance out the improvements in a way that allows the interaction between them to grow. Adding pedestrian space throughout the square was important so that orphan spaces are not created and the connections in all directions can be improved. Widening sidewalks and creating a series of spaces that can allow retail to spill over onto the street allows the entire area to share in added vibrancy. Recognizing the "front door" impacts to all uses is also necessary, so that while all sidewalks are widened, the size and design of each may vary depending on the abutting retail or residential use. Vibrancy is also defined broadly as maintaining much of the on-street parking to enhance the area's destination character, and support the adjacent businesses.

The concept to remedy this situation is to reduce the amount of roadway by widening the sidewalks. The widening of the sidewalks creates more room for pedestrians and streetscape amenities to support a walking environment. It also significantly reduces the length of the crosswalks which increase pedestrian safety.

Preserve an iconic element

The existing rotary is an easily identifiable and iconic element of Hyde Square. While evaluating redesign options, the community recommended that the rotary be included as part of the future of Hyde Square. Providing additional artistic elements would be an important part of continuing to forge the identity of Hyde Square. Besides the rotary, the Square's most notable visual features include the curved Art Deco façade of the 401 Centre Street building (housing the Ultra Beauty Salon and The Haven pub), and the brick wall surrounding the Angel Memorial Animal Hospital (the former site of the Perkins School for the Blind).

Make Hyde Square Accessible, Sustainable and Maintainable

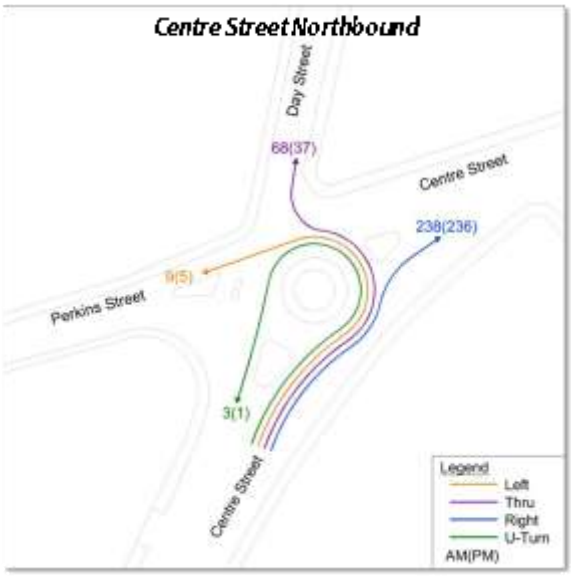
The long-term functionality of Hyde Square is key to the success of any redesign. Careful attention should be paid to ensure that the design can thrive with minimal ongoing maintenance. Tree pits and landscaped should be designed to allow vegetation to flourish, with features allowing for ease of ongoing maintenance. Added features, such as rain gardens should be included to capture and even reuse the rain water that today simply washes across the asphalt and into the sewer. Lastly, the design must be accessible, and offers the opportunity to fix existing deficiencies such as the non compliant pedestrian ramp at the northwest corner by Angel Memorial, and the half steps at the building entries along the southeast Centre Street frontage caused by excessive grade changes.

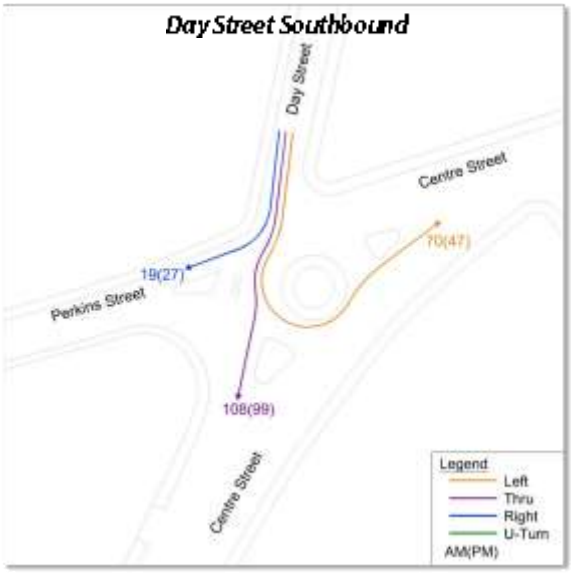
Existing Conditions

Traffic

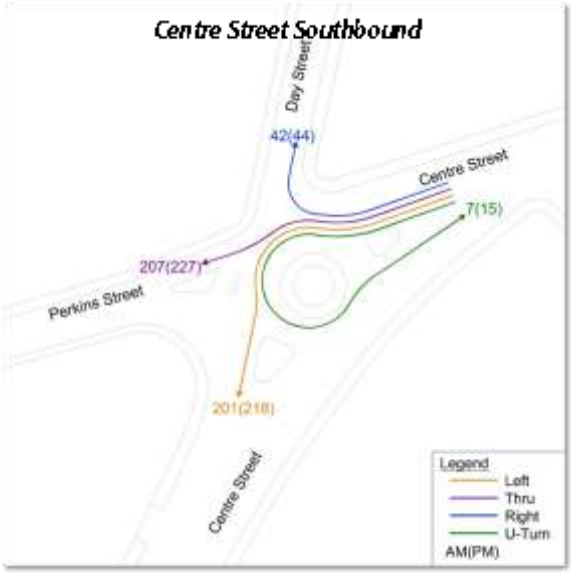
Hyde Square is one of the few rotaries in Boston. Functionally, it operates with minimal delay on all approaches, owing primarily to the amount of asphalt in the intersection, as movements rarely conflict. While the Day Street and Perkins Street approaches are Stop controlled, the Centre Street approaches are not. In fact the Centre Street northbound movement today operates almost as an exclusive through move, and somewhat outside the rotary.

The figures below show existing traffic volumes in Hyde Square by approach and destination. Both the AM and PM peak hours have similar total vehicle volumes of around 1,250 vehicles. The busiest movement is the Centre Street westbound approach with vehicle destinations evenly split between the westbound through movement to Perkins and the continuation to Centre Street southbound. Perkins Street east and Centre Street north have similar approach volumes, with the majority of vehicles headed to Centre Street east. The Day Street approach has the lowest volumes with about 15% of the total vehicle traffic entering the intersection.





Existing Vehicle Peak Hour Volumes, Hyde Square



Existing Pedestrian Peak Hour Volumes, Hyde Square

Pedestrian & Bicycle

Pedestrian activity in Hyde Square is limited by the long crossings along each of the approach streets. Data collection efforts showed comparatively few pedestrians crossing these streets in both the AM & PM peak hours. This is not for a lack of pedestrian activity in Hyde Square, as it appears that pedestrians stay on one side of the corridor or the other, and cross when they need to somewhere outside the Square. The figure to the left shows existing crossings in Hyde Square. The sidewalks in Hyde Square are typically 10 feet, which is not sufficient to allow for sidewalk cafes or retail spillover to occur. At this width, even street trees or street furniture begin to constrict sidewalk functionality. Bicycle activity in Hyde Square appears relatively low, but the peak hour volumes collected may understate daily bicycling numbers. Moreover, counts were conducted when no specific bicycle accommodations were present. Since that time, bicycle lanes and shared lane markings have been installed here as part of the overall corridor implementation program.

Streetscape/Character

Visually, the Square's notable features include the curved Art Deco façade of the 401 Centre Street building (housing the Ultra Beauty Salon and The Haven pub), and the brick wall surrounding the Angel Memorial Animal Hospital (the former site of the Perkins School for the Blind). The sidewalks, trees, and street features are well used and active, but fairly unremarkable. Storefronts and other building frontages vary significantly with some particularly interesting, yet overall these lack any unifying characteristics. Many of the residential buildings on the south side of Hyde Square are multifamily, and fairly typical of Boston's neighborhoods, but due to the grade change are set high on the street. With a dense environment and lack of vacancies, the street wall is constant and well defined. A series of artistic street furniture installations were put in place about several years ago and provide added visual interest.

Recommendations

The Hyde Square design retains the basic configuration of the rotary, but substantially reduces the paved area of the Square. The figure on the following page shows the recommended configuration and location of specific design elements to be carried forward in the final design of Hyde Square. The design shown best integrates the desired functionality of Hyde Square for all transportation modes and incorporates design goals with the following features:

Reduce Pedestrian Crossing

Expand Tree Pit

Traffic

- The diameter of the rotary will be reduced and realigned, narrowing each approach.
- All intersection approaches will be "Yield" controlled, eliminating the "Stop" controlled Perkins and Day Street approaches.
- Free movements will be eliminated with all traffic required to enter the rotary.
- Despite the reduced roadway and rotary width, sufficient room for vehicles to pass is provided, maintaining traffic capacity

Pedestrians

- All crossings will be reduced
- All sidewalks will be widened within the reconfigured Hyde Square.
- Sidewalk widening and pedestrian spaces have been balanced and spread throughout Hyde Square with an emphasis on added space.
- Sidewalks, pedestrian ramps and crosswalks will all be made ADA accessible and compliant, as sidewalk widening allows room to correct existing grade deficiencies.

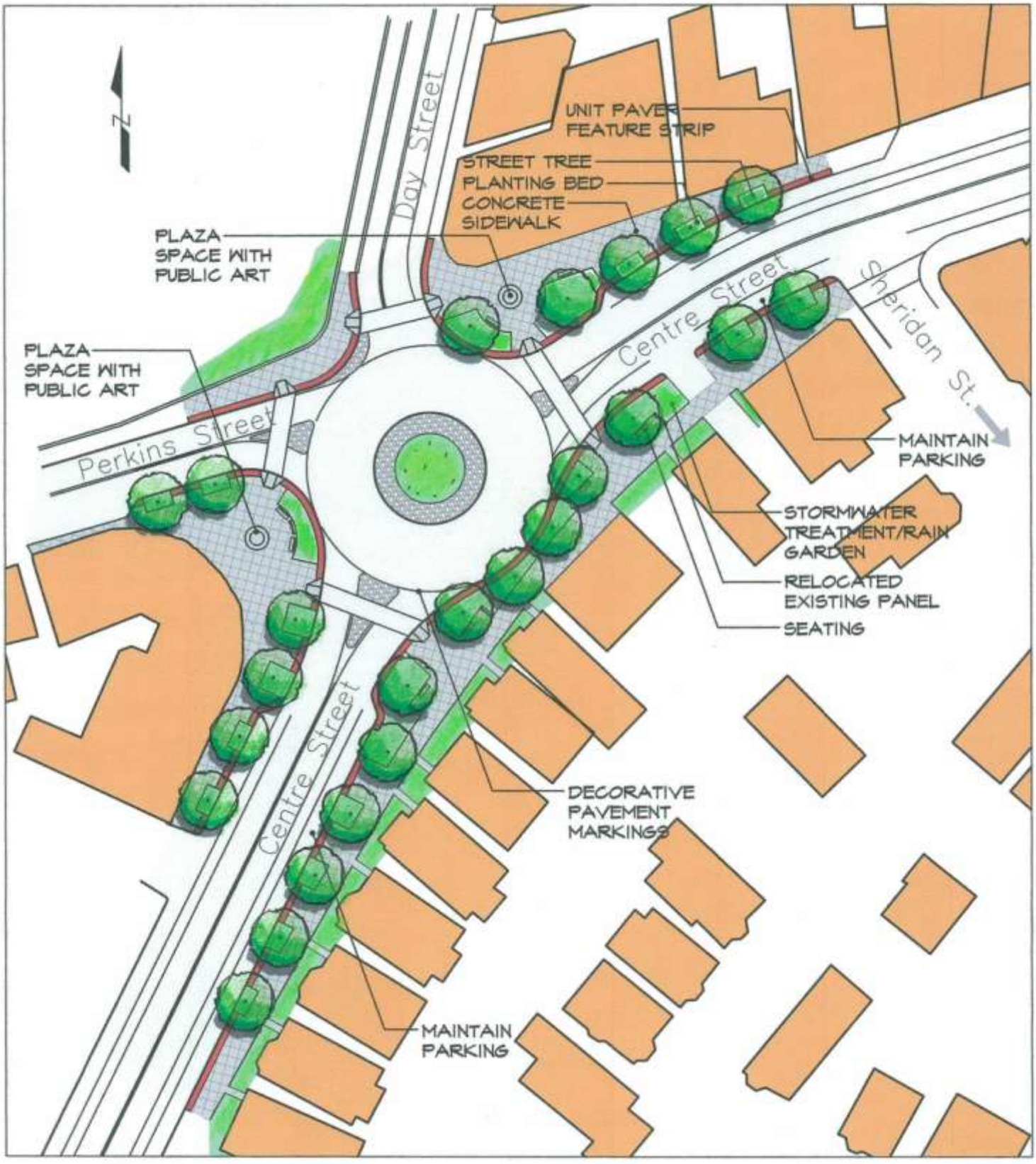
Bicycles

- The design will continue to accommodate bicycles, by incorporating the bicycle lanes and shared lane markings installed as part of the overall corridor implementation program.
- Additional room for bicycle racks will be created in the plaza areas.

Parking

- Parking has been preserved throughout Hyde Square, except within the rotary itself.
- Expanded plaza area allow for the creation of additional parking on Perkins Street.
- Two hour parking regulations will be expanded

Hyde Square Concept



Design

- Additional room for bicycle racks has been created in the plaza areas.
- The maintained rotary configuration will continue to provide an iconic and identifying character to Hyde Square.
- Plaza areas have been balanced throughout the Square to ensure each corner receives improvements, but no plaza areas are excessive.
- A mixture of hardscape and landscape areas will provide both functional and aesthetic space in each plaza.
- Space for seating areas has been provided adjacent to restaurants and other commercial establishments
- Areas that can support artwork are identified in the design, and artwork developed would add to a developing iconic character.
- The Veterans' Memorial in the rotary is relocated to the expanded plaza area where it is more accessible.

Sustainability/Maintainability

- High-quality materials are recommended for all areas, including the materials recommended in the Streetscape Guidelines.
- Condition 3 trees, the larger, spreading varieties, are recommended, and will be supported by larger tree pits which would allow them to thrive.
- Rain gardens are recommended, and shown on the south side of Hyde Square and will work well with the overall intersection grade.

8. Monument Square

Located at the intersection of Centre Street and South Street, Monument Square is an important connecting node in Jamaica Plain. Named after the Soldier's Monument to Civil War veterans, Monument Square represents an historic center with prominent buildings defining its edges. These buildings, and the central island on which the Monument sits, are all set well back from the street. The Square is dominated by a wide expanse of asphalt, creating a large but somewhat isolated area. Nevertheless, Monument Square is a central point between the Centre and South Street commercial districts, and also serves as a transportation hub with several bus routes connecting in the Square. Vehicular traffic on Centre Street splits around the Monument with westbound traffic to the north and east-bound traffic to the south of the central island. Despite recent renovations to the Monument itself, the island is surrounded by a fence and is not generally accessible for any public access.

Existing Conditions, Monument Square

Goals and Issues

Connect JP Centre to South Street business district

While Centre and South Streets are often perceived as a continuous business district, the current configuration of Monument Square does not physically contribute to that goal. Pedestrian crossings and sidewalk paths through the Square can be difficult to navigate. More importantly, with the island fenced in, and most buildings set well back from the street, Monument Square too often feels like a place you must pass through, and not a place you are invited to enjoy. The redesign of Monument Square must be sensitive to this dynamic, and attention must be paid to making Monument Square a place that unites the vibrant commercial districts on Centre and South Street.

Improve safety for all users

For Monument Square to be a well utilized successful space, it must be safe and welcoming. Presently, pedestrians, motorists, bicyclists and transit users all suffer from a potentially difficult passage.Pedestrians must choose their path through the Square early in their approach to avoid poor sidewalks and difficult crossings. Drivers travel either too fast or too slow depending on how they are moving through the Square. Bicyclists must navigate a variety of conflicting traffic moves, in often ill-defined roadways. Lastly, all must pay attention to the variety of MBTA buses using all approaches to Monument Square. Careful redesign of Monument Square must take all users into account, and establish priorities through design where uses interact. Creating useful space, and incorporating lighting, sight lines, landscaping, street furniture and other amenities to encourage desirable uses and make Monument Square a destination rather than a pass through will also contribute to improved safety for all.

Reduce traffic delays and protect parking

For motorists heading south, Monument Square is where the congestion in JP Centre begins to abate, and vehicles can accelerate, often at unsafe speeds. Yet, at approaches such as the Centre Street eastbound movement, traffic delays can be extensive, especially at peak times. Moreover, turning movements and bus operations cause minor traffic delays. Minimizing this congestion is important not just for the functionality of Monument Square, but to keep vehicles from seeking alternate routes through residential neighborhood streets. In addition, the supply of parking in and around the Square serves to relieve demand within the commercial districts during the day and within the adjacent residential neighborhoods

at night. While studies show that these spaces are not as occupied as others in the Centre and South Street corridor preserving parking in Monument Square is important to abutting residential and commercial property owners.

Create space for community use

For as active as the JP Centre district is, there is a distinct lack of space for community use. While sidewalks and mini plazas along the corridor all contribute to a vibrant neighborhood, there is no place for gatherings. Located in the heart of the district, a reconfigured Monument Square offers the ability to create a space for community use and celebration. Through the Action Plan process, suggestions of community uses such as farmers market, ceremonial space, and playgrounds have been made for Monument Square, it is clear that the design should create a space which offers multiple opportunities. Much of the space created will come from reclamation of current roadways simultaneously improving safety and increasing community space.

Respect the sanctity of the Monument and re-integrate with surrounding prominent, historic buildings

Located at an historic crossroads, the Soldiers Monument is one of the oldest Civil War memorials in the country and has defined Jamaica Plain, and this Square since long before it was a part of the City of Boston. Originally designed and placed as a contemplative place, the sanctity of the structure and the surrounding area should be preserved in any new design. Removing the fence, and allowing access to the Monument can help reinforce its appreciation by allowing it to be experienced by the community in a way not possible today. Over time, the Monument has been separated from its historic surroundings, and a redesign of the Square must re-establish the historic visual connections to the prominent surrounding buildings as one of Monument Square's most memorable features.

Historic renderings of the Soldiers' Monument

First Church in JP Unitarian Universalist

Loring-Greenough House

Curtis Hall

Soldiers' Monument

Existing Conditions, Monument Square

Monument Square is primarily defined by major landmark structures setback from the street by generous lawns, all surrounding the Soldiers Monument.

Existing Conditions

Traffic

For traffic purposes, Monument Square can be seen as consisting of three intersections, Centre Street and Eliot Street, Centre Street and South Street and Centre Street and Holbrook Street. The intersection of Centre Street and Eliot Street currently has a pedestrian actuated traffic signal which rests on flashing yellow for Centre Street and flashing red for Eliot Street. The intersections of Centre Street and South Street and Centre Street and Holbrook Street are unsignalized. Eastbound Centre Street is Stop controlled at South Street.

Centre Street veers west towards West Roxbury at Eliot Street, with the southbound continuation becoming South Street. This creates a somewhat awkward alignment for vehicles heading west on Centre and a dangerous environment for vehicles exiting Eliot Street because of limited sight lines. In fact, presently left turns from Eliot Street are illegal due to this conflict.

Looking south toward Monument

Looking north toward Monument

West side of Monument

East side of Monument

Peak hour vehicle counts show that the Centre Street southbound approach has a westbound/southbound breakdown of 55%/45% during the AM peak hour, and 40%/60% during the PM peak hour. Overall, the Centre/Eliot Street intersection operates with minimal delay during both peak hours, with the Eliot Street approach showing a Level of Service (LOS) B, and the Centre Street approaches at LOS A.

The most problematic approach is the Centre Street eastbound approach to Monument Square. All eastbound traffic operates on the one way section south of the Monument Square island. The majority of these vehicles are turning left, essentially continuing travel on Centre Street. This presently stop-controlled approach operates at a LOS E during both the AM and PM peak hours. Additionally, the left turn is often difficult due to a lack of clear sight lines, and vehicles must nudge their way through the intersection in order to safely traverse it.

Pedestrian & Bicycle

Monument Square, despite its openness, is not a particularly pedestrian friendly environment. Those traversing the square typically stay on one side of the street and continue through it. Even the northern intersection (Centre and Eliot Streets) with its exclusive pedestrian actuated signal, suffers from an awkward alignment and long pedestrian crossings. Most of the sidewalks in Monument Square are no more than 8′ in width. The sidewalks along the Monument Square island are even narrower, and with streetlights and signs, their functional path does not even meet ADA minimum requirements. The east and south sides of the island in particular are substandard, both in width and cross-slope contributing to an environment hostile to pedestrians. For bicyclists, the recently installed bicycle lanes on Centre/South Street run through Monument Square, a vast improvement from when the trolley tracks were exposed. However, there are no cross connections to Centre Street, which is both a major commuting corridor and a connection to the Emerald Necklace. Bicyclists hoping to use the east-west part of Centre Street suffer from the same congestion and lack of delineation that vehicles do.

Public Transportation

Four separate MBTA bus routes pass through Monument Square. The busiest of these is the 39, which uses the Centre/South corridor to connect Forest Hills to Back Bay Station. Route 38, which connects Jamaica Plain to West Roxbury turns from Centre Street to South Street. Both the 41 and

the 48 terminate and layover in Monument Square contributing to traffic congestion and the need for curb space in the Square. Route 48 is the JP loop bus, connecting parts of the neighborhood, while Route 41 travels along Centre Street from Monument Square through Fort Hill in Roxbury and ultimately on to Dudley Square, Uphams Corner and JFK/UMass station. Inbound, all buses stop at an expansive bus stop in front of the Loring-Greenough House. Outbound there are three stops in Monument Square, one nearside of Eliot Street, one in front of the Unitarian Universalist church on Centre Street, and one on South Street just far side of Centre Street. There are no shelters for any of the bus stops in Monument Square.

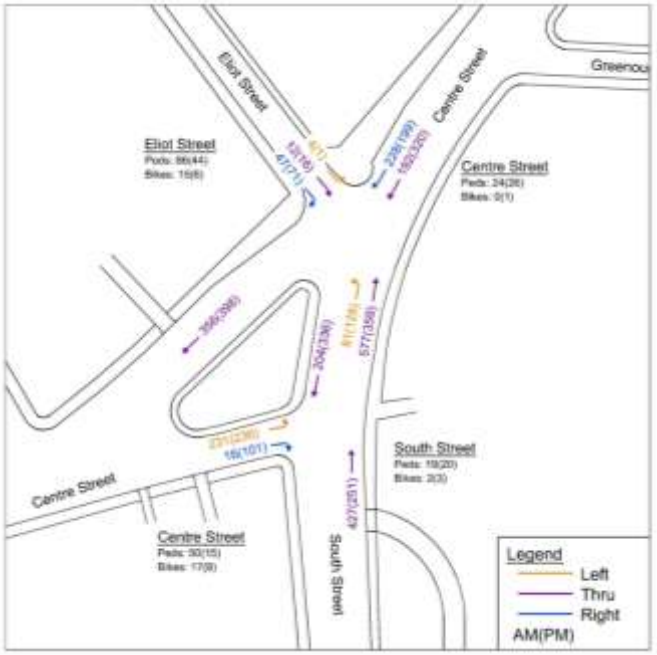
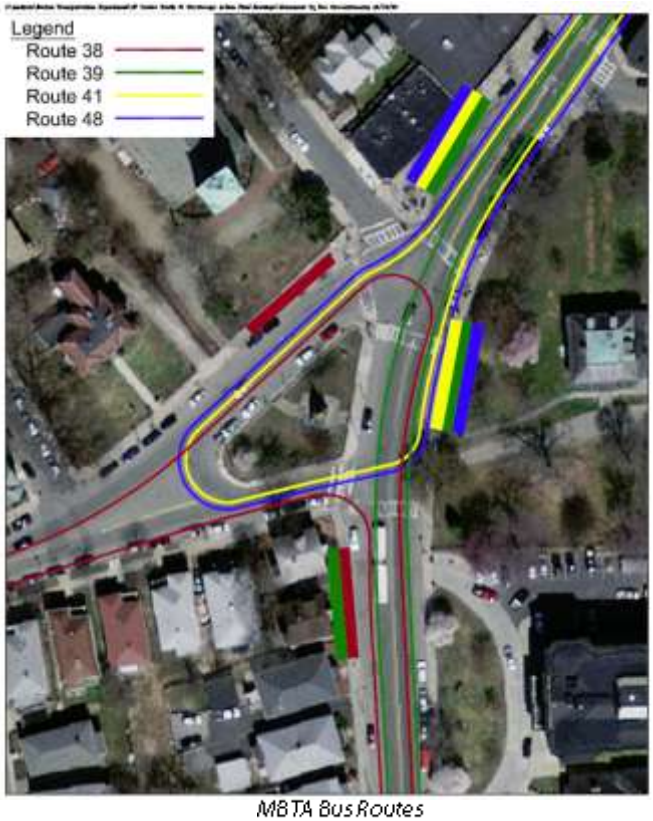


Diagram of 2010 traffic volumes

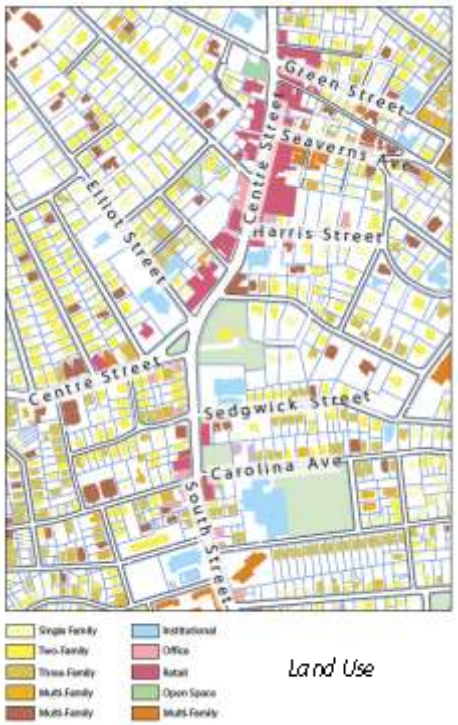
Streetscape/Character

Located just past the southern end of the Jamaica Plain Center commercial district, Monument Square is distinct from the commercial district in both land use and urban form. North of Elliot Street the buildings are located at the back of sidewalk and create a traditional retail frontage with its sense of enclosure and activity. South of Elliot Street the character changes dramatically with the monument as the focus of an historical center where the major buildings defining its edges are set well back from the street with generous lawns and plantings.

The Unitarian Universalist Church, the building next door to the church (now housing medical offices), the Loring-Greenough House and Curtis Hall are all prominent buildings that shape the space around the monument. The monument, located on a large traffic island, is surrounded by a sea of asphalt and separated from the main pedestrian paths which follow the outside of the intersection. The monument itself is fenced off and people wishing a closer look must cross an unsignalized intersection to get to the island. This creates a large and isolating forecourt to the Soldier's Monument.



MBTA Bus Routes



Land Use

Recommendations

A set of six alternative concept designs were developed to respond to the Goals identified above. Through an extensive community process these design approaches were whittled down and combined to an initial single preferred alternative. However, support for this alternative is not unanimous in the community. As the concept designs in this Action Plan are slated to be developed into final designs leading to construction in a subsequent public process, it was determined that two alternatives would be carried forward:

Expanded Park Concept
Enhanced Island Concept

Expanded Park Concept

This design expands the Monument Square island into a peninsula by uniting it with the area by the Unitarian Universalist Church and closing it off to through traffic. This portion of the street would greatly expand the space available for community activities and enhance pedestrian connections in Monument Square. Westbound traffic on Centre Street would be rerouted to the southern side of the Monument, which would operate as a two-way street, with a new signalized intersection at the corner of Centre and South Street. Access to abutters, and for emergency vehicles, would continue through the closed portion of Centre Street which would be designed and treated as a shared pedestrian-vehicular way, preserving also the historic portion of Centre Street as a carriageway.

Example of carriageway (Richmond, VA)

Designs for the area around the Soldier's Monument would also reflect the following parameters:

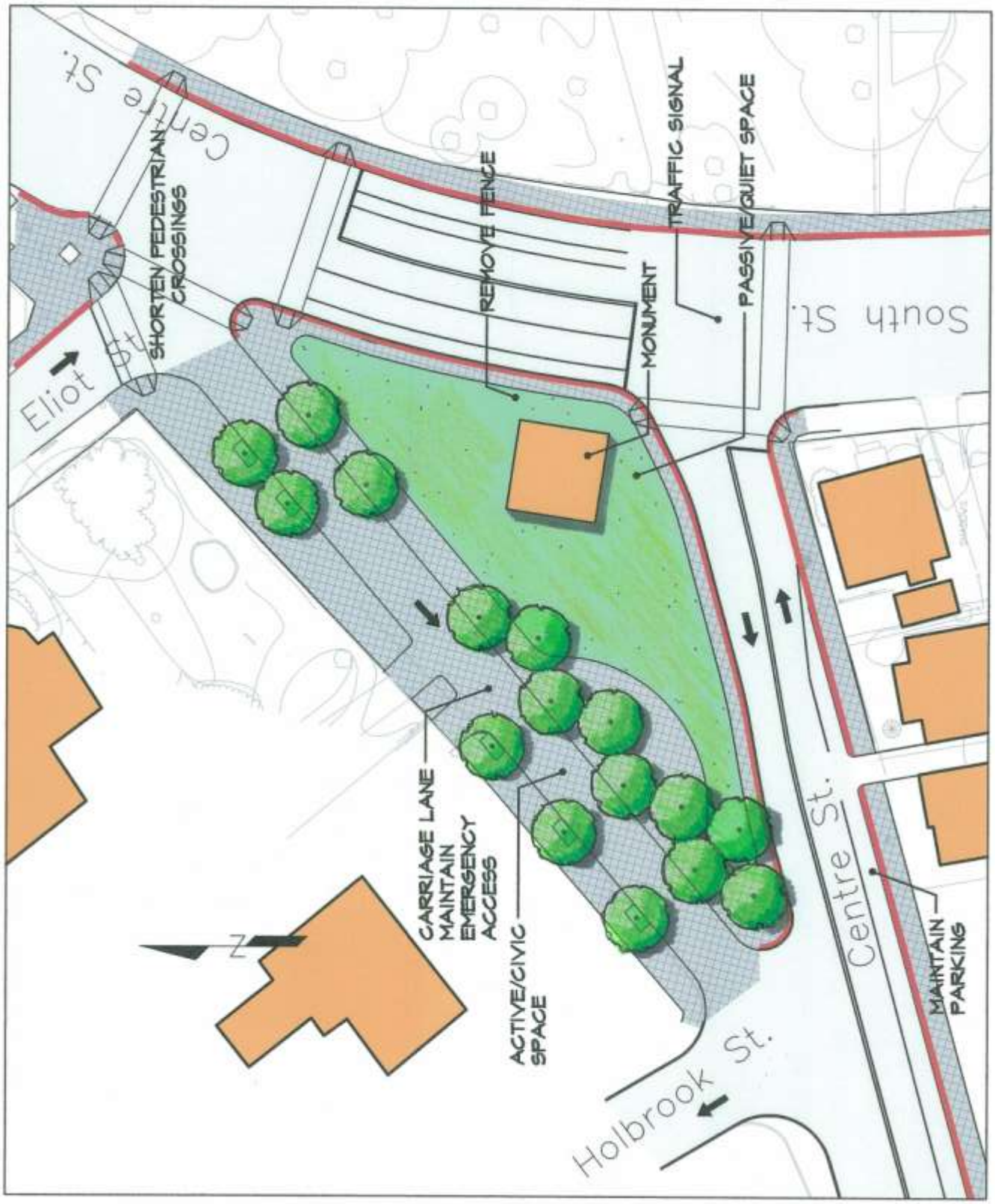
- Passive space will be maintained around the Soldier's Monument to preserve the historic sanctity and contemplative nature of the Monument
- Fences around the island and/or Monument would be removed
- Views of the Monument would be preserved from each approaching street
- Additional trees and landscaping will be planted to increase the usability and sustainability of the area, but will not interfere with important sight lines to the Monument.
- Space for community use will be created, but not specifically programmed

- Pedestrian and bicycle connections through the Square will be incorporated into all designs
- The pedestrian/vehicular street created will be flush to the surrounding plaza, and will be constructed of materials to differentiate it from a regular asphalt street.

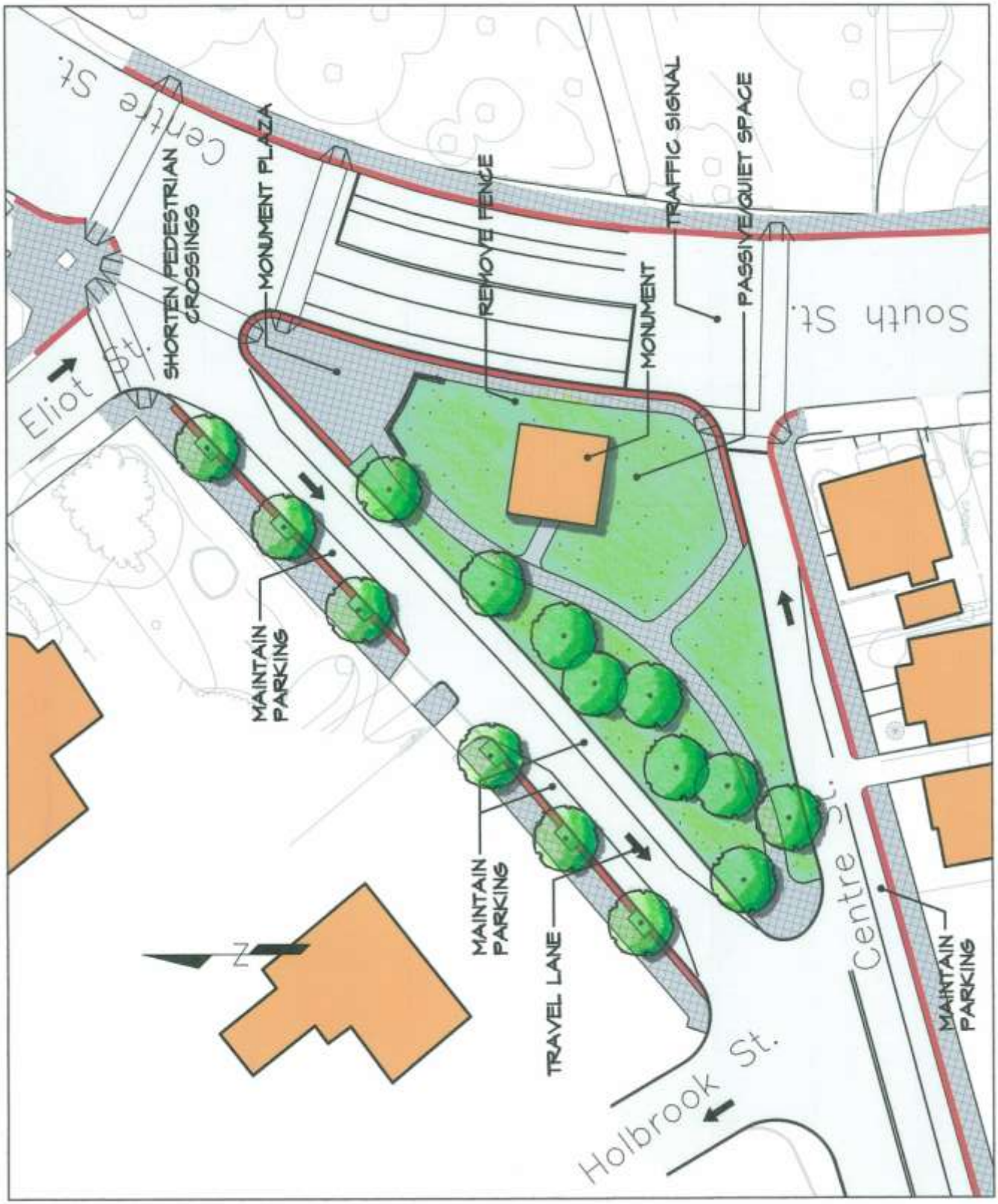
Enhanced Island Concept

This design enlarges the existing Monument Square island and makes additional enhancements to the surrounding area. Note that many of these improvements would occur in either the Expanded Park or Enhanced Island scenarios, including:

- A traffic signal at the intersection of Centre Street eastbound and South Street.
- Enlarge the island to provide sidewalks and a small landscaped area without obstructing view corridors to the Monument
- Remove all fences at the Solider's Monument
- Relocate the inbound bus stop at the Loring-Greenough House to in front of Curtis Hall and incorporate a bus shelter.
- Shorten the pedestrian crossing at Eliot Street and Centre Street.
- Incorporate bicycle connections through Monument Square.
- Preserve access to abutting users, and all existing traffic movements.
- Upgrade all sidewalks beyond ADA accessible requirements.



Expanded Park Concept



Enhanced Island Concept

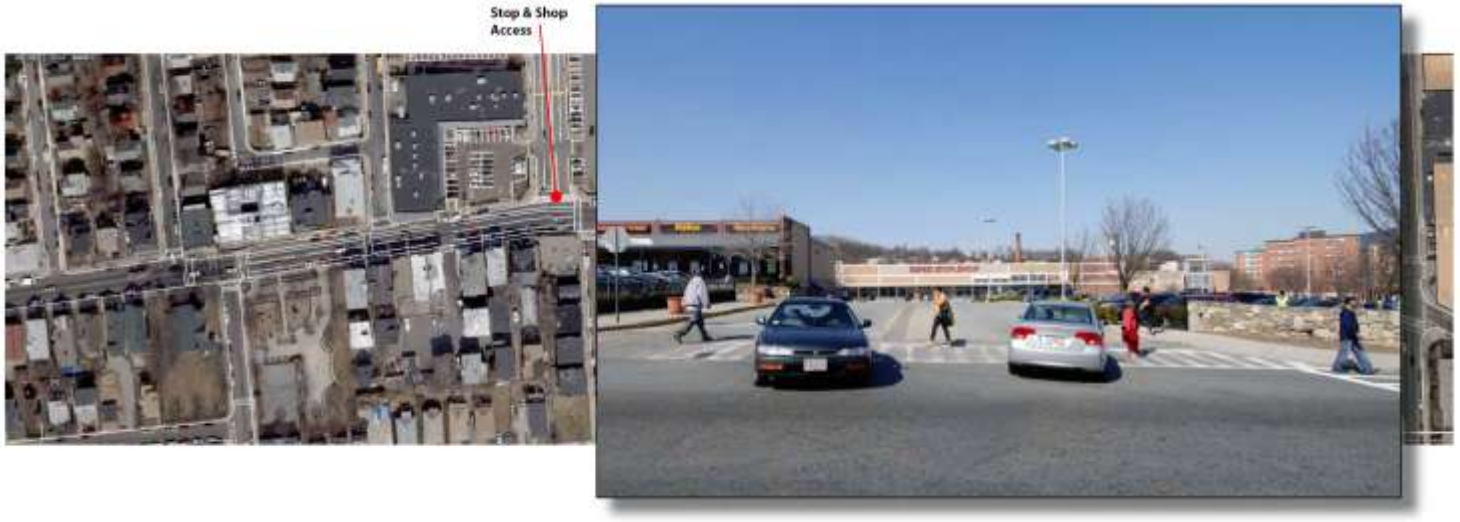
9. Jackson Square to Mozart Park

The Jackson Square to Mozart Park portion of the Centre Street corridor is a highly-used commercial district with large-parcel development on the north side of the street and more traditional single-storefront commercial on the south side. With Hyde Square, it is heart of Latino activity in the corridor and supports multiple restaurants, shops and services supporting the community. Jackson Square to the east, is a major intermodal center, hosting an MBTA Orange Line station, a major bus hub, and a connection to the Southwest Corridor and the site of a major, long –planned mixed-use development. Centre Street is the entry to the Jamaica Plain community and with no parallel street, serves a variety of functions. Despite a high level of activity, there are only two signalized intersections, Mozart Street and Lamartine Street, along the corridor.

Existing Conditions, Jackson Square to Mozart Park

270 Centre Street
Under Construction
Proposed Jackson
Square Development

Chestnut Avenue
Right-of-Way


Stop & Shop
Access

Bromley Heath
Off-Street Parking

Southwest Corridor
Crossing

Goals and Issues

Apply Corridor Guidelines

Unlike the Hyde Square and Monument Square areas, which were large intersections, the Mozart Park-Jackson Square section is a 0.25 mile section of the Centre/South corridor.

Develop a defining character/Create places

The section of Centre Street is successful due to the varied mix of land uses and building forms. However, block by block, corridor character changes in this area. Side streets do not line up across Centre Street, and a surprising number of gaps in the street wall exist throughout the corridor. Bromley Heath housing, Stop & Shop plaza, and various intersections, each create urban design and functional challenges to maintaining corridor vibrancy. Based on the corridor-wide guidelines, the goal is to look at these issues as opportunities to create "special" places on Centre Street. These designed areas could be memorable in their own right, and potentially unify the corridor.

Support Pedestrian Activity

Serving both the dense neighborhood surrounding it, and a more regional Latino clientele, the Mozart Park-Jackson Square section hosts a high level of pedestrian activity. Challenges to walking are significant, and include:

- Relatively narrow sidewalks, constricted further by poorly functioning tree pits, and ill conceived street furniture.
- Inconsistent crossings of both Centre Street and the side streets
- Barriers, such as the wide and relatively unsafe crossings of the Stop & Shop driveway, and Bickford Street.
- Concentrated pedestrian activity approaching the Jackson Square MBTA station.

Build on ongoing developments

Major developments are in varying stages of construction and will help redefine this section of Centre Street. With the Jackson Square project and 270 Centre Street, the eastern end of the corridor in particular will be transformed, creating a gateway effect to this area. Blessed Sacrament, just to the west of this area will further anchor the area's continued vibrancy. Plans for this section must not only provide connections to these developments, but also be sufficient to accommodate the added street life that will be created once these are fully occupied.

Existing Conditions

Traffic and Parking

As with the rest of the corridor, Centre Street is a two-way roadway with one lane in each direction. The curb to curb width is approximately 42 feet, with parking allowed on each side of the street. Any congestion experienced is usually a function of the friction created by local vehicle activity either making turns, allowing pedestrians to cross, accessing parking, or double parking. There are two traffic signals within the design area, at Lamartine Street and to the west at Mozart Street.

Parking Utilization: Forbes Street to Jackson Square

There are approximately 80 on-street spaces between Jackson Square and Forbes Street and most are regulated as two hour parking. The chart to the right shows parking usage throughout the day and demonstrates that even though parking is well used, it is never more than 74% full, and even then only at the peak 11 AM hour. Stop and Shop Plaza is a significant off-street parking facility, with a total of 224 spaces for use by customers of the supermarket.

Pedestrian and Bicycle

Recently installed bicycle improvements include a climbing lane (designated bicycle lane) in the westbound direction of Centre Street, which is the uphill direction, and "sharrows" or shared lane marking in the eastbound direction. Pedestrian activity is high, especially on the northside of Centre Street approaching Jackson Square MBTA station. This sidewalk is deficient, as it is narrow, in poor condition with significant heaving in several areas, and is disrupted by curb cuts serving parking areas adjacent to the sidewalk. Crossings exist, but are inconsistent, and not generally aligned with pedestrian desire lines. Additionally, the entire area has sidewalks of around 8 feet, which does not allow for two people to walk abreast nor does it allow for retail and restaurant activity to spill onto the sidewalk.

Streetscape

Land uses lining the north side of the street – the MBTA Jackson Square station, the Bromley-Heath public housing development, the Stop & Shop building, parking lot, and shopping center – are all internally organized and do not add to the vitality of the street. On the south side, on either side of Estrella Street, there is a concentration of restaurant and food related retail stores. Mozart Park and the Southwest Corridor Park bracket each end of this segment. Most significantly, Centre Street has a series of ill-defined spaces, most notably the intersection of Chestnut Avenue. At best these

places detract from the areas street life potential, while at worst they become disenfranchised spaces in which undesirable activity occurs.

Recommendations

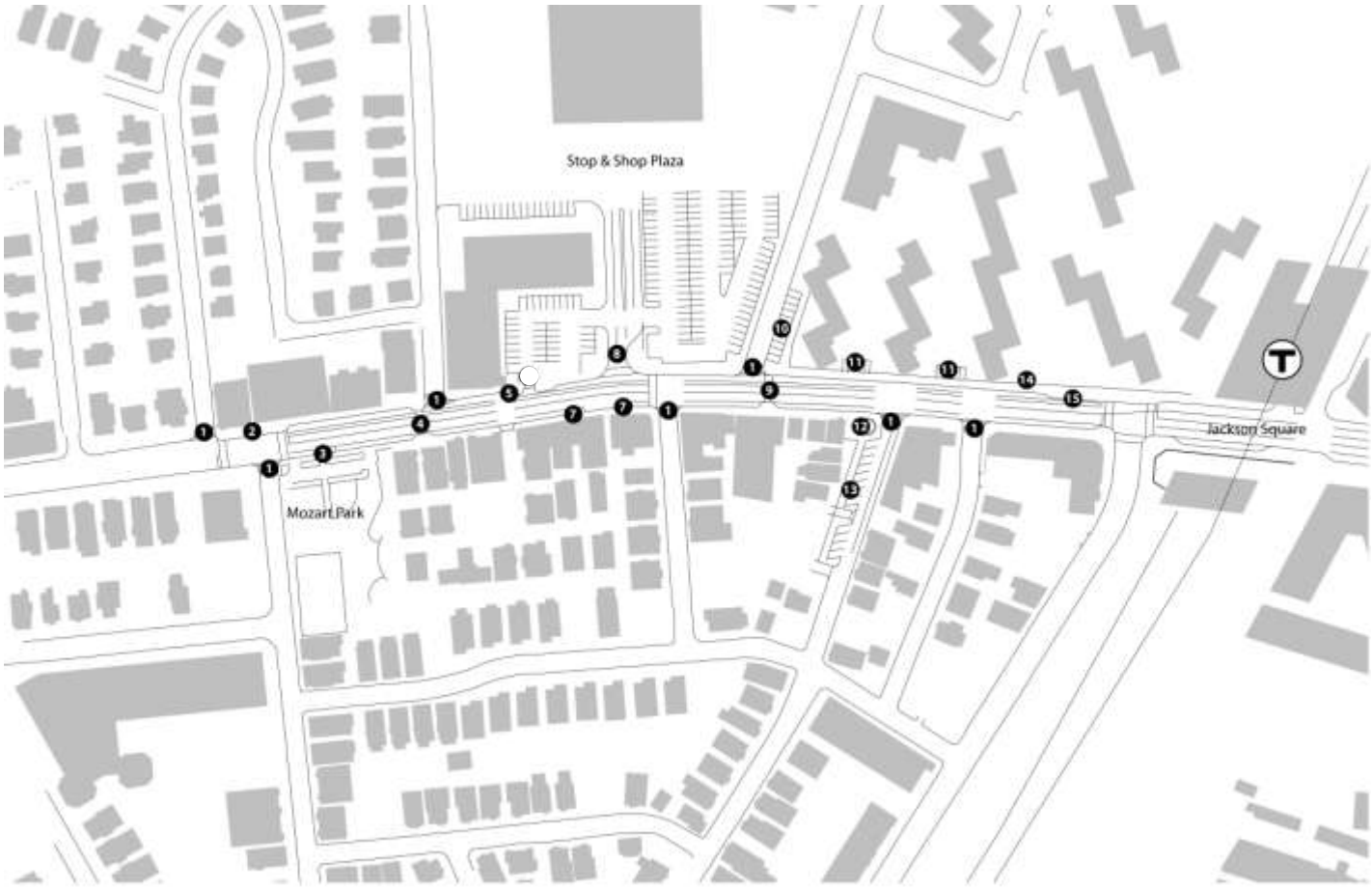
Expanding sidewalk space to support pedestrian activity and street life is essential to the future of this section of the corridor. This goal, however, has to be balanced against the need to accommodate curbside parking and bicycles. While bicycle facilities have already been installed, it is also not desirable to remove an entire lane of parking. Given these conditions, sidewalk widening are proposed only at key locations.

The proposed plan for this section creates a series of small-scale improvements to develop "special" places along the street. It includes selected sidewalk widening to create space for better circulation and possible outdoor cafés and sales; relocated crosswalks at important desire lines, and reorganized parking to reduce vehicular-pedestrian conflicts. The plan also applies many of the elements of the Streetscape Guidelines.

Proposed Improvements in the Jackson Square-Mozart Park Corridor
(refer to diagram below)

1. Raised crosswalks across side streets approaching Centre Street create a continuous, level sidewalk.
2. Widen sidewalk near the Estella Bakery, from crosswalk to crosswalk, to allow opportunities for outdoor seating.
3. Shorten bus stop from 82 feet to 62 feet and gain an additional parking space.
4. Add a crosswalk at the west side of Walden Street.
5. Widen sidewalks on both sides of the parking lot exit. The widening on the east side prevents parking immediately adjacent to the driveway and allows drivers pulling out increased visibility. The widening on the east side relives a pinch point and allows for the relocation of the collection of newspaper boxes outside of the principal waling path.
7. Widen the sidewalk for 20 to 25 feet at two locations for outdoor café seating or sidewalk retail.
8. Redesign the shopping center driveway to make it friendlier, for example,

Jackson Square-Mozart Park Corridor Improvement Plan



by adding a raised pedestrian island.

9. Widen sidewalk at crosswalk connecting to bus shelter for improved pedestrian visibility.
10. Shift Bromley-Heath parking westward to improve pedestrian circulation adjacent to building.
11. Phase out parking behind the sidewalk to reduce pedestrian vehicular conflicts and add green space (or tot lot) to Bromley-Heath lawn area. If handicapped spaces need to remain, then relocate them to the curb.
12. Create small plaza at the intersection incorporating benches and trees.
13. Reorganize the parking that currently occupies space behind the curb in to angled, back in-pull out parking. Add a 10-foot sidewalk behind the parking and landscape residual areas as small front yard for the abutting properties.
14. Widen the heavily used sidewalk four feet into the lawn area of the Bromley Heath. Plant additional shade trees behind the sidewalk to provide a canopy over the sidewalk. Remove tree pits currently at the curb to increase pedestrian circulation area.
15. Extend the proposed widen sidewalk westward to further increase pedestrian circulation area.

Vignettes illustrating some of the proposed improvements along Centre Street, implementing principles established in the corridor-wide guidelines.